

**HOW SPONSORS INFLUENCE STUDENTS' WRITING PRACTICES IN AN  
EIGHTH GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM**

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# **HOW SPONSORS INFLUENCE STUDENTS' WRITING PRACTICES IN AN EIGHTH GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM**

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Writing instruction in schools is taking on increasingly narrow focuses, which reflects reliance on high-stakes standardized tests and standards movements that privilege some forms of writing over others. Researchers in writing have called for studies that connect macro forces influencing the educational environment to the instruction occurring at the classroom level. This study does so by exploring how a teacher sponsors multiple writing literacies across time and how and why students take up those writing practices for their intended uses and in ways that serve their own purposes. I examine the writing instruction of one skilled English Language Arts teacher through the lens of Deborah Brandt's theory of *sponsors of literacy* (1998; 2009) and through sociocultural theories of writing (Prior, 2004, 2006; Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2006) and identity (Davies & Harré, 1999; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Data drew from a) five months of observations in the classroom across multiple units of instruction marked by multiple writing practices; b) interviews with the teacher before and after the observation period; and c) interviews with five focal students at the end of the observation period. Findings suggest that the teacher's instruction reflected a variety of sponsors across multiple writing practices. The teacher's instruction highlighted the skills,

values, and purposes associated with sponsored writing practices. Students appropriated some writing practices more than others, and some more faithfully to the intentions of sponsors than others. Students imagined a range of possible uses for the writing practices in which they were sponsored, reflective of their individual literate identities.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Literacy research in recent years has highlighted the connections and disconnections between adolescents' in school and out of school writing instruction and practices. Some studies have described teachers who lack the skills or desire to include the kinds of writing and literacies in their curriculum that students practice out of school (cf. Chandler-Olcott & Lewis, 2010). Others describe the perspective of students who do not find the literacy learning offered by schools to be useful for their lives (cf. Kirkland, 2011). Writing instruction in many middle and high schools often focuses student efforts toward genres that are testable rather than those that offer opportunities for personal expression (Dawson, 2013; Scherff & Piazza, 2005). If students do not believe that the writing practices they learn from schools are helpful for their future goals and teachers do not feel empowered to teach those practices that students do find helpful, then middle and secondary schooling may play an increasingly marginal role in how people develop strategies for writing to meet academic, personal, and professional needs.

Different sets of standards articulate competing visions of the writing practices teachers should instruct and students should learn and use. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and International Reading Association (IRA) (1996) jointly published standards they claimed arose from teacher input and literacy research to prepare students for a range of writing possibilities to meet "their own needs as well as the needs of their families, their communities, and the greater society" (p. 12). Under the NCTE/IRA standards, students should learn four

purposes for writing and language use in English language arts classrooms: “for obtaining and communicating information, for literary response and expression, for learning and reflection, and for problem solving and application” (p. 12). The standards that include writing emphasize developing flexibility in style, purpose, audience, medium, and use of technology. The more recent Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association, 2010) were conceived through educational policy and politics and, though already displaying signs of tenuous authority, they have support from state and federal governments, educational reformers, textbook companies, and testing companies. The CCSS enjoy institutional support that exceeds any for the NCTE/IRA standards, which has established the CCSS as central to current writing instruction (Beach, Thein, & Webb, 2012). The standards themselves touch on purpose, audience, and technology use while also delineating standards for informational, persuasive, and narrative writing. They also place a special emphasis on finding and utilizing textual evidence to strengthen writing. A key difference with the NCTE and IRA standards is the stated purpose for engaging in writing in the CCSS. The CCSS do not mention personal and community-based purposes for writing but direct student efforts toward “college and career readiness” (n.p.). While the content of the CCSS standards themselves is not dissimilar from language in the NCTE and IRA standards, the narrowed focus of the CCSS offer fewer purposes for writing, and the standardized assessments that are aligned to the CCSS further reduce teacher authority to create and adapt instruction to the local needs of students (Beach, Thein, & Webb, 2012, p. 11), particularly when standards codify dominant culturally-bound viewpoints (p. 13).

Recent reports from Applebee & Langer’s National Study of Writing Instruction (2013) indicated that writing instruction has followed recommendations for research to some extent but has also been constrained by assessments. Almost all English teachers in their study employed

process-approaches to writing that have consistently been regarded in the literature as integral to writing instruction (Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graham & Perin, 2007). At the same time, over half of all teachers “reported frequent practice in timed, on-demand writing” (Applebee & Langer, 2013, p. 18). Though Graham & Perin’s (2007) meta-analysis of writing research called for explicit instruction in writing strategies, Applebee & Langer found that only 6% of time for writing instruction was focused on explicit strategies (2013, p. 22). Additionally, the strategies that teachers would instruct in situations of “frequent” practice with timed writing would most likely be pre-writing and drafting strategies, while they would have fewer opportunities to teach strategies for revision and collaborative writing.

Research has shown that students do not like the narrowed focus of their writing instruction when curriculum emphasizes writing that serves as test preparation (Scherff & Piazza, 2005). In a survey of students in Florida, Scherff and Piazza found that frequent instruction in test preparation reduced the students’ access to research-based instructional practices like process approaches to writing (2008) and their opportunities to write in multiple genres (2005). Students lacked opportunity to learn from quality writing instruction for several reasons:

- a lack of student voice in curricular decisions,
- inequalities in experiencing quality instruction resulting from tracking, and
- inequalities in experiencing quality writing instruction in courses that required test preparation (based on student grade level) and courses that did not (2008).

Findings such as Scherff and Piazza’s and Applebee and Langer’s suggest that more research is needed into how teachers instruct students in multiple writing practices that serve multiple

purposes and how students see the potential future purposes for the writing instruction they are getting.

In describing a vision for how writing research can respond to issues like those addressed above, Englert, Mariage, and Dunsmore (2006) suggested several important directions. They saw a specific need for research that accounted for how “communal and individual [writing] development” is influenced by “larger social systems” (p. 217). They argue that researchers should examine writing instruction in classrooms for the influence of actors from outside schools, such as “parents, administrators, school boards, state curriculum standards, and federal mandates” (p. 217)—on both *what* students learn and what they plan to *do* with what they learn.

## **1.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDY**

The proposed study adds to this body of literature by using Deborah Brandt’s theory of *sponsors of literacy* (1998; 2009) as a lens for examining the writing instruction of a skilled English Language Arts teacher in order to understand how local and distal actors sponsor particular writing practices and how students appropriate these writing practices in expected and unexpected ways. Specifically, I studied the writing instruction of one eighth grade English language arts teacher and the ways in which his students wrote and imagined their future writing as a result of his instruction.

### 1.1.1 Theoretical framework

In an environment where teaching in individual classrooms is frequently directed by policies composed at a great distance from actual classrooms, there is an opportunity for research to reveal how abstracted influences have concrete effects on the teaching and learning in classrooms. More than that, research can reveal how multiple conceptions of writing conveyed through instruction in writing practices in single classrooms influence how students take up—or not—and adapt—or not—writing instruction for their own academic and personal goals. This study pairs Deborah Brandt’s theory of sponsors of literacy (1998; 2009) with sociocultural theories of writing and literate identities (Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2006; Lewis & Del Valle, 2009; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Prior, 2004, 2006) to investigate these issues. Brandt’s theory of literacy sponsorship maintains that literacy learning is the product of people and institutions who enable or suppress access to literacies in an effort to shape literacy practices around values that benefit themselves as well as the learner. Sociocultural theory also focuses on cultural influences on writing and literate identities by examining how institutions shape social practices like writing and how individuals are shaped by and re-shape the practices available in their cultural contexts.

The primary theory of this study is Brandt’s *sponsors of literacy* (1998; 2009), which explains how literacy dissemination creates opportunities for individuals to learn and practice specific forms of literacy, including writing. To Brandt, sponsors are “agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (2009, p. 25). Brandt traced the influence of sponsors in the literate lives of individuals through a series of over one hundred interviews with adults. She demonstrated how macro social and economic forces impacted the



people she interviewed by creating unequal access to literacy practices and changing the opportunities available to those who practiced literacies in specific ways. She also demonstrated that people translate, or appropriate (p. 40), literacy practices from the contexts and intentions of their sponsors, though she did not discuss how her findings revealed her participants' literate identities. Although Brandt's theory is considered seminal in the fields of composition and literacy studies, no other research has analyzed the sponsorship of literacies in K-12 classroom instruction.

In order to do so, I link Brandt's work in relation to theories that have been fruitful in explaining literacy learning in classrooms, specifically sociocultural theories of literacy that address issues of identity. Brandt's work draws on an ideological view of literacy (Street, 1991/2003), where literacies represent cultural practices created with specific purposes and values in mind. Sociocultural theories of writing and literacy describe how literacy practices and literacy learning connect to ways of speaking, acting, and representing the self in the world (Lewis & Del Valle, 2009; Moje & Lewis, 2007). Sociocultural theories of identity describe how people constitute versions of the self through different ways of behaving, speaking, and participating in the social world (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Lewis & Del Valle, 2009; Wenger, 1998) and how schooling and other ways of learning literacy practices engage students in learning new ways of engaging with practices that make up (new) identities (Moje & Lewis, 2007). Literacy learning, then, and learning about writing in particular, can provide students new ways of participating in academic, (inter)personal, and professional worlds.

Teachers influence students' appropriation of literate identities by positioning students as certain kinds of writers, readers, and people (Davies & Harré, 1999; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). In their instruction, teachers communicate expectations for who students are and can be,

such as someone capable of creating original interpretations of texts through writing or someone limited to filling in the blanks of a template. Part of learning to recognize the expectations of these positions is discovering the storylines that convey “patterns” of ways of speaking and behaving—and writing—inherent to them (McVee, 2011, p. 6). These patterns communicate the purposes and values embedded in particular writing practices, for as Englert, Mariage, and Dunsmore noted, “Writing is not value-neutral” (p. 217). Students learn how positions and storylines direct their writing and learning opportunities toward broader communities of practice, or groups of people who engage in standardized social (and literate) practices for roughly common goals (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). By engaging in writing practices while positioned as certain kinds of people who are participating in certain kinds of communities, students have the opportunity to imagine new uses for literacy practices and the potential centrality of those practices to future conceptions of themselves (Wenger, 1998). This line of sociocultural theory posits that students try on new literate identities through the writing practices they learn in school (i.e. someone who writes narratives or someone who is good at creating arguments) and consider whether they will continue practicing those identities or replace them with something else.

Using the lens of sponsorship allows me to map the writing identities students take on in relation to the writing practices they learned under their teacher’s instruction and the influence of him and other sponsors. In her work, Brandt consistently connected an individual’s literate practices to the social and economic contexts for his or her learning of those practices. Because writing is not value neutral, using Brandt’s theory of sponsorship helps us understand whose values are served through specific writing practices. And because writing can help students form new identities as they learn new skills, Brandt’s theory helps us understand how those identities

have prepared students to contribute to specific economies—or purposes for writing—and how those economies shape the skills the students learn and the identities they select. In schools, the theory of sponsorship helps researchers investigate how the narrow range of academic literacy practices available to students serves the interests of forces in the economy and privilege some students who can access them while excluding others who cannot. Finally, the theory of sponsorship investigates the future purposes students imagine of the writing practices they learn in school—and whether those purposes represent the sponsors’ wishes or an appropriation of those practices to other contexts that align with the students’ personal goals.

Studies of the connections between in-school literacies and students’ identity formation tend to focus on the teaching of a single kind of writing, such as engaging in peer review (cf. Freedman, 1992) or the teaching of the five-paragraph essay (Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003). Through the lens of sponsorship, this study investigates a constellation of writing practices sponsored in on English Language Arts class. The proposed study aims to add to the body of literature on students’ literate identity formation in schools by examining the varied literate identities that students appropriate in response to a skilled teacher’s sponsorship of multiple literacy practices.

### **1.1.2 Study design**

This study explores how an English Language Arts teacher sponsors multiple writing literacies across multiple units of instruction and how and why students take up those writing practices for their intended uses and in ways that serve their own purposes. I conducted observations in the classroom of one eighth grade English Language Arts teacher over a five month span, interviewed him before and after my observation time, and interviewed five focal students at the

end of the observation period. I employed qualitative methods of data analysis including analysis of interviews and classroom talk and inductive coding of fieldnotes. In this study, I answer the following questions:

- How does a skilled middle-level teacher sponsor multiple writing practices in his English Language Arts classroom, and what practices is he sponsoring? More specifically, what terms of access, ideological freight, and economies do these sponsored writing practices represent?
- How do students appropriate (take up and modify) the writing practices sponsored by their teacher? More specifically, how do students' positions as writers, and their projections of possible writing identities, develop in response to their teacher's sponsorship?

To answer these questions, I first examined the instructional practices through which the teacher sponsored certain writing practices. I then analyzed how students responded to the ways they were positioned in these practices, both in terms of their views of their learning and in how they imagined future uses for the practices. In so doing, I used the theory of sponsorship as a lens to analyze the relationship between classroom instruction, literacy practices, and students' literate identities.

## **1.2 ORGANIZATION OF DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter two introduces the central and supplementary theoretical frames with literature related to writing instruction. Chapter three presents the methodology of this study, including design, participant selection and sketches of

participants, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter four presents the instruction of the focal teacher and how he sponsored six specific writing practices. Chapter five then analyzes how five focal students took up, translated, and appropriated the teacher's six writing practices and also constructed four hybrid practices that synthesized multiple aspects of their teacher's instruction. Finally, I use chapter six to draw implications for researchers and writing instructors interested in the potentials of *sponsors of literacy* as a lens on classroom instruction.

## 2.0 THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will describe and analyze Brandt's theory of *sponsors of literacy* (1998, 2009). Brandt developed the theory of sponsorship as a response to the influence of powerful people, institutions, and economic forces that she saw involved in the literacy learning of individuals. She primarily focused on the ways people learned and practiced literacies in professional settings. For example, she traced the literacy development of a man named Dwayne Lowery in her initial study (1998). Mr. Lowery was for many years a local representative for a public employees union, though he had no formal college education. He was trained in negotiations and contracts by his union and found success in engaging state politicians in debate and writing contracts favorable to the union. State negotiators soon began employing attorneys that specialized in labor law. This institutional shift led to Mr. Lowery spending more of his time on reading examples of regulations and briefs to remain competitive. However, the union for which he worked also shifted their tactic so that their side was also represented by special attorneys until Mr. Lowery was forced into retirement when his position was given to a university-trained negotiator. In Mr. Lowery's story, local conditions of literacy use reflected broader institutional and economic shifts that first enabled and then outpaced his literacy development.

My study similarly studies the interaction of the micro and macro but in school-based literacy sponsorship, which Brandt always acknowledged as a site of sponsorship but did not examine herself. In this chapter, I will describe how I have modified and added to the theory to

bring it as a lens to a classroom study before describing how sponsorship adds to existing theories of writing instruction and literature.

The concept of sponsorship is familiar in American society. In media, companies sponsor television shows and movies through advertisements and product placements, which viewers understand as indicating the sponsor's support for and enabling of the show or film. Fans of a soccer team know that the name of a bank is not on the front of their team's jerseys because all the players have accounts there; they recognize that the bank has partially funded the fielding of a competitive squad.

The calculus of sponsorship can be perilous. For the sponsors, the team or piece of media sponsored can become an object of scorn and derision if the presence of the sponsor is seen as incongruous with the values of the sponsored or the product that results from the sponsorship is of inferior quality. For the sponsored, the price of sponsorship may be acquiescing to sponsors' influence in making particular choices in scripts, casting, or player management. For example, a racecar driver may lose sponsors from his team for controversies that are unrelated to on-track performance. Without enough funding from external sources, even a championship-caliber driver can lose the opportunity to compete.

Sponsorship in American culture does not always have an obvious economic basis. Groups may sponsor behaviors that align with their values, though the connection between the behavior and the core mission of the sponsor may seem tenuous. For years, Pizza Hut ran a program that encouraged children to record the amount of reading they do to earn free pizzas. Heifer International, a non-profit organization that attempts to combat poverty and hunger, also organizes a reading program for children, but they involve the children in enlisting sponsors for their reading so that, for each book read, the child earns money that will be sent to Heifer

International to fund donations to people in need. Both Pizza Hut and Heifer International create opportunities for children to engage in what they see as positive behaviors while furthering their own missions. Still, despite the familiarity of the concept, sponsorship would seem to be an awkward fit with classrooms and student-teacher relationships.

## 2.1 UNDERSTANDING SPONSORS OF LITERACY

Literacy researcher Deborah Brandt developed the theory of *sponsors of literacy* (1998, 2009) using data from over one hundred interviews. She described how individuals learned, or did not learn, literacy practices through the actions of social structures, institutions, and other people, which she collectively termed *sponsors*.<sup>1</sup> To Brandt, sponsors are “agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (2009, p. 25). I take the definition in five parts.

First, if sponsors are “agents,” that places upon them a capacity for action and (at least partial) self-determination, or the “socioculturally-mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001). Embedded within multiple levels of social affordance and constraint, agents make choices that are most able to help them pursue their goals. Those without agency, then, would be considered unable to make such choices; rather, they would act at the behest or choice of others. Agency is not a binary or an absolute. Agency is more like a continuum in which people have greater or lesser freedom to act depending on their relative power within situations, and that freedom shifts

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<sup>1</sup> Brandt focused on both reading and writing practices. In analyzing her theory, I will do the same, though my implementation of the theory in this classroom study focuses only on writing due to the affordances of my research context and participants.



in contexts and across time. By choosing the word *agent*, Brandt identified sponsors as wielders of power in the dissemination of literacy and claimed they “set the terms for access to literacy” (2009, p. 25). They are able to direct their own and others’ efforts toward acquiring and employing literacy practices.

Brandt complicates the figures of agents by making them either “local or distant, abstract or concrete.” Sponsors, then, may be visible or invisible, known literally or felt figuratively, and still exert agency over the literacy learning of a person. Religious practice may be the most salient example of agents of literacy sponsorship that are both intimate and removed. An Evangelical Christian may believe that God expects her to read the Bible as a way of developing knowledge of and love for God. She would probably not claim to know God in the same concrete and face-to-face manner that she knows a family member, but the imperative of the relationship is no less strongly felt for its being ethereal. Her belief would be proliferated and supported by the teaching of her local pastor, who may also provide resources and reading strategies that enable the kind of reading literacy that the pastor feels is appropriate for engaging with the Bible. The woman may also find devotional literacies reinforced by her denomination, religious publications, or other forms of religious media.

As a local and concrete agent, the pastor is a sponsor of the woman’s faith-based reading, but much of his authority derives from her perception of his privileged connection to larger structures of sponsorship that are increasingly removed from her. The pastor is both a sponsor and the embodiment of more abstract sponsors; they speak through him (Bakhtin, 1981/2006). Brandt has described sponsorship as linking micro and macro structures involved in literacy learning (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). Support for that claim lies in the relationship between the

sponsored and their sponsors, who appear as agents of literacy-learning opportunities of varying levels of intimacy and finitude.

The second part of Brandt's definition, to "enable, support, teach, model, [and] recruit," refers to the creation of literacy learning opportunities. As a group, the five verbs above account for sponsors' *enabling* actions. To return to the above example, the woman is recruited into specific ways of reading the Bible by her engagement with a local pastor's teaching. Further opportunities for learning come from the support and resources of the local church and para-church organizations. The influence of the sponsors allows the woman to encounter, explore, and develop proficiency in some specific reading literacies they feel support her development as a practitioner of the faith.

In her work, Brandt never speaks only of the creative potentials of sponsorship. The third part of her definition, "regulate, suppress, or withhold," deals with the *suppression* of literacy learning opportunities. Various denominations have at times discouraged congregants from engaging in personal reading of the Bible out of a view that people may come to wrong conclusions about what it says, and the necessary training for reading was reserved for clergy. The modern Evangelical woman faces no such constraints, as access to the Bible is abundant and often free in America. However, she may find that a lack of resources or connections to people with the requisite knowledge would prevent her learning to read the Bible in its original Greek and Hebrew. Suppression, therefore, does not have to be an active withholding of literacy from someone but also includes structural or systemic lack of opportunities (Brandt, 2009, p. 29).

To unpack the fourth part of Brandt's definition is to determine what she means by invoking the term "literacy." Brian Street has framed a central debate over this term as the conflict between *autonomous* and *ideological* models of literacy (1993/2001). Those working

from an autonomous model “conceptualize literacy in technical terms, treating it as independent of social context, an autonomous variable whose consequences for society and cognition can be derived from its intrinsic character” (p. 431-2). Literacy is thus something that changes people in the same way across cultures, because the qualities of literacy are its own. Theorists in this mold often used oral cultures and writing cultures as the proof of their claims and incorporated language that suggests that writing is its own agent; it happens to people. For example, in describing differences in religions that arose in oral cultures and in literate cultures, Jack Goody stated that “writing also *permitted* the construction of more elaborate schemes as well as the greater manipulation of letters, words and numbers” (1968, p. 17; emphasis mine). More bluntly, Walter Ong claimed that writing changes how people are able to think:

To say writing is artificial is not to condemn it but to praise it. Like other artificial creations and indeed more than any other, writing is utterly invaluable and indeed essential for the realization of fuller, interior, human potentials. Technologies are not mere exterior aids but also interior transformations of consciousness, and never more than when they affect the word. (1986, p. 23)

Yes, writing is a creation, but it is a creation that of itself transforms consciousness into something more human than it was before.

Street’s explanation of the ideological model of literacy highlights a move away from studying the effects of literacy and toward seeing literacy as “inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society,” “recogniz[ing] the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts,” and “study[ing] these social practices rather than literacy-in-itself for their relationship to other aspects of social life” (1993/2001, p. 433-4). Literacy is therefore not a monolith but is more appropriately termed *literacies* to acknowledge

the multiple ways of defining and practicing literacy when cultural norms are considered. Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words* (1983) stands as a seminal example of literacy research that demonstrated the ideological nature of literacy. By documenting the ways people in two communities practiced reading, writing, and speaking frameworks, and the cultural norms that influenced those frameworks, Heath was able to show that basic literacy forms (reading, writing, or storytelling) took varied purposes depending on the needs and styles of their users.

Brandt aligned herself with *ideological* theories of literacy, where “literacy in a society takes its meanings and consequences from how it is used” (2009, p. 118), to a point. For Brandt, the connection between an ideological view of literacy and sponsorship is that “sponsors deliver the ideological freight that must be borne for access to what they have” (p. 27). Embedded within the teaching of any literacy is the purpose for which the sponsor would have it be used, which is a way of controlling both the literacy and the user of the literacy. However, Brandt argues that literacy in itself does have meaning. Its users shape it for specific purposes, but “its meanings are neither wholly produced nor wholly used up in a local setting” (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 348). Literacy is too complex and beholden to too many interests to be completely produced in a single locale. She proposes sponsorship as a link between local and global views of literacy learning because of how such a lens allows researchers to see *literacy-in-action* (p. 349) and literacy as “multisourced” through various agents (p. 351). Her view is not that writing in itself restructures thought, as Ong stated, but that literacies are so thoroughly shaped by multiple interests that the ideologies of them can be difficult to separate from the materials of their production (p. 350). Artifacts and tools of literacy are another way that sponsors, local and distant, can be present and powerful to the sponsored.

The final segment of Brandt's definition is the stipulation that sponsors "gain advantage by [their sponsorship] in some way." For Brandt, these advantages are economic:

Literacy looms as one of the great engines of profit and competitive advantage in the twentieth century: a lubricant for consumer desire; a means for integrating corporate markets; a foundation for the deployment of weapons and other technology; a raw material in the mass production of information. As ordinary citizens have been compelled into these economies, their reading and writing skills have grown sharply more central to the everyday trade of information and goods as well as to the pursuit of education, employment, civil rights, and status. (2009, p. 24)

Corporations require specific uses of literacy to generate money. They will use known forms of mass communication literacy to advertise products or services. Any training or education that they require of their workers goes toward developing the industry-specific literacies necessary to generate more money. Corporations that train their accountants in a new software or method for auditing gain a direct economic advantage by their sponsorship in the form of increased efficiency or revenue. In the situation of the Evangelical woman, one benefit to the local church to sponsoring her devotional literacies is an increased likelihood that she will continue to offer financial or time support for the church's programs; for publishers, she will continue to purchase texts that teach the kinds of religious practice she finds beneficial. The sponsored typically understand such training as a benefit, and see other rewards from it, yet the cost is the direction of their labor toward the goals of their sponsors. Put another way, Brandt wrote, "Sponsors are delivery systems for the economies of literacy, the means by which these forces present themselves to and through individual learners. They also represent the causes into which people's literacy usually gets recruited" (p. 25).

As Brandt interpreted her interviews in light of her developing theory of sponsorship, she highlighted three outcomes: differential access to literacies resulting from local contexts and systemic inequities (p. 28), changing literacy standards that phase out the centrality of some people's literacy abilities and replace them with others that require different kinds of learning (p. 32), and the ways in which individuals transport learning from some intended purposes to their own (p. 40). Brandt called this third process *appropriation* and recognized it as the sponsored's ability to subvert the economies into which their literacies were recruited. Through appropriation, people can "divert sponsors' resources toward ulterior projects, often projects of self-interest or self-development" (p. 40). To return a final time to the Evangelical woman, those who sponsor her reading of the Bible would only want her reading that book in those ways. She may decide on her own to take her devotional reading to texts like the Koran, the Bhagavad Gita, or the Communist Manifesto. Brandt suggests that the possibility of appropriation is what leads many sponsors to hold "tight ideological control" over the literacies they sponsor (p. 40). Part of literacy learning, then, is learning the values that should attend the practice of the literacy.

Throughout this analysis of the construct of *sponsorship*, I have attempted to demonstrate how Brandt's lens has brought an important insight to the study of literacy dissemination and learning. Local sponsors and their relationships to the sponsored are vitally important, but the local remains in the perspective of larger cultural movements and economic forces that retain significant influence. Researchers can ask questions about how literacy-in-action is occurring and materially impactful, what has enabled some opportunities while suppressing others, whose interests are being served, and what the implications are for the relationship between the sponsor and sponsored.

### **2.1.1 Sponsors of literacy and the teacher-student relationship**

The relationship between teachers and students looks like many others described by Brandt's theory of literacy sponsorship and may be productively examined as such. However, the overlap is not perfect. Some clarifying and translational work is necessary to move sponsorship into the classroom.

Who are the agents in classrooms? Those that are local and concrete are the classroom teachers, but like any local agent, they are also the animators (Goffman, 1981) of those sponsors that students would see as more abstract. If students acknowledge other sponsors in the classroom, they may recognize standards and assessments as influencing their learning, particularly when teachers write standards on a white board or use practice test items during instruction. Teachers may betray the differences between instruction that arises from a sense of agency and instruction that does not when some lessons are prefaced with phrases like “Today, we get to read \_\_\_\_” and others are attended by language of “having to \_\_\_\_.” One question that could be asked of classrooms is how and whether students perceive instruction that arises from the local agency of teachers and instruction from some other agent that teachers animate as meaningfully different for their own uses of literacy. Additionally, what opportunities for appropriation might students be more inclined to take depending on the agent of literacy instruction?

Teachers will also find themselves enacting both the enabling and suppressing aspects of sponsorship. Teachers enable by providing encounters with new literacies. They support by offering personal and technical assistance in learning. They model by sharing their own reading, writing, and engagement with the world. They recruit students into literacies by validating their efforts or providing avenues for further development of skills and affinities. Teachers regulate

literacies when they teach them for a few purposes when others are also valid, as when argumentative writing is primarily directed toward timed-writing for state assessments. Teachers suppress literacies by classifying them as outside of what is appropriate for academic use. Currently, texting is a prominent suppressed literacy in schools. The withholding of a literacy occurs when teachers choose not to include in their curriculum a literacy that students are not likely to encounter anywhere else. Reader-response as a lens for reading literature (Rosenblatt, 1978) is a literacy that teachers often withhold when they do not see how it can support the kind of close reading promoted by standards. Poetry writing may become a withheld literacy for students under the Common Core standards, as there are no writing standards connected to poetry—and there will therefore be no assessments that include poetry writing.

Not all enabling is positive in the learning of students, nor is all suppressing negative or malicious. Teachers may excel at enabling students into the creation of 5-paragraph essays, but the purposes for that kind of writing are so limited that students may find no way of transferring most of the skills involved to other writing. Teachers may have many reasons for withholding sponsorship of certain literacies that are motivated by concern for their students' learning. For reasons of time, curriculum, or standards, teachers often simplify instruction to meet what they perceive are students' central needs. An English Language Arts teacher might enjoy working a fiction-writing workshop into the reading of a novel, but when the unit assessment is a literary-analysis essay, workload and time may be against students being able to engage authentically with both.

It would be impossible to ascribe to teachers a universal view on the nature of literacy. However, scholars argue that other aspects of schooling reinforce autonomous models of literacy, particularly “the ability to decode and code symbols in isolation from any political,



social, and cultural context” as found in “official curriculum” (Lewis & del Valle, 2009, p. 310). Standardized tests often require students to read purpose-written articles on topics with which they may have no familiarity. From an autonomous point of view, lack of familiarity with subject matter would have no bearing on a student’s ability to decode, comprehend, and respond to test items. Teachers with autonomous views of literacy may also make them manifest through “deficit-oriented perceptions of students as lacking literacy skills” (p. 310). Teachers who see literacy as ideological might take more time to explore, discuss, and highlight connections between students’ out-of-school literacies and academic tasks (Heath, 1983; Lewis & del Valle, 2009).

The final segment of the definition, the stipulation that sponsors “gain advantage by [their sponsorship] in some way,” makes more sense outside of a schooling situation when interpreted literally. Teachers are not supposed to benefit directly from their work with students, at least not economically. Rather, they are more commonly perceived to gain psychic or social benefits. Teachers receive a steady salary for their sponsorship, but it is not traditionally dependent on students’ application of the literacies they learn from the teacher.

I propose three ways for reconciling the dilemma of teachers gaining advantages by their sponsorship under Brandt’s definition. First, though my use of the term does deviate from Brandt’s in that I am less focused on the distribution of literacy learning across a society—i.e. the ways wealth, geography, and race factor into a “stratification of opportunity [that] continues to organize access and reward” (Brandt, 2009, p. 28)—I still recognize the influence of more abstract sponsors on the daily workings of local classrooms. I am using sponsorship as a student-centered lens for teachers to apply to their teaching of literacy, and wealth, geography, and race do factor heavily into teaching and learning (cf. Milner, 2013). The goals of those with

enough public influence and money to shape education policy do impact local classrooms—often without acknowledging the influence of wealth, geography, and race on learning outcomes. Other scholars see similar influences from outside sources on policies that affect classroom in tangible ways. Gee (2012) argued that so-called “literacy crises” are the result of drivers of economies calling for new kinds of literacy education to prepare the workers they need, dating to changes from industry to knowledge to service-based economies (p. 26). The programs officials put in place to change the conditions responsible for the “crises” modify the standards for education in ways that would prepare students to engage in the kinds of literacy practices they felt would bolster the new economic needs (p. 27). Lindquist & Seitz (2009) saw the influence of a “few testing companies” in reliance on standardized assessments of easily quantifiable measures of literacy under the standards of No Child Left Behind (p. 3). However a researcher interprets such scenarios—as difficult choices made with students’ needs in mind or as “(at best) misguided” attempts to manipulate the educational system (Freire, 1970/1996, p. 53)—he or she must demonstrate how these sponsors’ actions affect individuals in local situations of study. Teachers and students may not acknowledge abstract influences in their daily interactions, but if the outcomes for students are still what the policy-influencing sponsors desire, the sponsors are gaining the advantages of their sponsorship: creating a large pool of generally qualified labor, or labor at the beginning of a path toward qualification, with little direct cost on their part.

Second, I redefine advantages in terms of the life of a classroom and the relationship between a teacher and students. When teachers operate as sponsors of literacies with which they are skilled or for which they have particular affinities, the teaching of those literacies becomes an opportunity to expand the teachers’ expertise or love. The teaching of those literacies allows teachers to recruit new members to the communities of those who practice them (Lave &

Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). For teachers who practice critical pedagogy, the sponsoring of certain ways of reading, writing, and producing media can create opportunities for students to exercise agency in adding their voices to social justice movements—potentially positioning them as co-activists in causes with their teachers.

Third, I acknowledge that education reform movements like Race to the Top, and private grants from agencies like The Gates Foundation, are increasingly restructuring teacher evaluations and pay around student performance on standardized assessments. Direct economic benefits and penalties for students' facility with literacies is becoming more common, meaning more teachers could fit the literal economic interpretation of Brandt's definition. In sum, I place less emphasis on teachers gaining advantage by their sponsorship as it pertains to literacy instruction in schools but do examine how the literacy work of students in classrooms serves the "economies" of one or more of their sponsors.

Literacy sponsorship as a lens for studying classrooms can help researchers see the effects of teachers' choices on student learning and potential. Researchers can ask questions about the messages students are receiving from teachers and other sponsors about uses for literacies and the ways learning literacies affects students' views of their future academic, professional, and personal lives. They can ask whose interests are served through students' literacy work. To see literacy-in-action (Brandt & Clinton, 2002) in the classroom, researchers can observe how resources, planning, and in-the-moment interaction between teachers and students create spaces where practice with and talk about literacies occurs. Local sponsors and their relationships to the sponsored are vitally important, but the local remains in the perspective of larger cultural movements and economic forces that retain significant influence. The above description does not preclude the possibility of sponsorship between students (e.g. initiating a

peer into an out of school literacy or convincing a peer of the importance of “buying in” to a schooled literacy) nor sponsorship of the teacher by students (e.g. persuading the teacher to build a library of young adult fiction in his classroom). While important and worth highlighting, such moments are considerably less frequent than traditional teacher to student models of literacy dissemination, particularly when researcher access is limited to the classroom space.

## **2.2 SPONSORSHIP AND SOCIOCULTURAL THEORIES OF WRITING, IDENTITY, AND POSITIONING**

No studies of teachers and students, no studies of writing instruction, and no studies in middle or secondary schools have taken Brandt’s *sponsors of literacy* as a central theoretical frame. Recently, Sulzer (2014) applied sponsorship as a secondary theory in explaining how textbooks aligned to the Common Core limit the kinds of reading valued in classes, but the theory is absent from other empirical studies despite calls for research into literacy studies that cite Brandt’s work as a means to “better analyze the relationships between the global and the local (Brandt, & Clinton, 2002) in sociocultural work” (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 20). This section will connect sponsorship to complementary theories of learning, specifically as they relate to learning writing, in order to operationalize sponsorship for classroom research.

### **2.2.1 Sociocultural theory**

As Prior (2006) noted, “Sociocultural theories represent the dominant paradigm for writing research today” (p. 55), and sociocultural theory pairs well with ideological perspectives on

literacy—a stance I see in sponsorship. Both sponsorship and sociocultural theory examine the means by which macro-level influences work on individuals. In building a sociocultural theory of writing, Prior (2006) explained key facets of the paradigm, saying, “Sociocultural theory argues that activity is *situated* in concrete interactions that are simultaneously *improvised* locally and *mediated* by prefabricated, historically provided tools and practices” (p. 50, emphasis in original). As with sponsorship, sociocultural theory looks to explain how local writing acts are formed by and respond to larger cultural forces. Students write to known forms but ostensibly have the ability to inject their intentions within them, though schooling often limits students’ abilities to compose in favor of near-rote repetition of the teacher in writing tasks (Applebee & Langer, 2013). To claim that activity is mediated is to say that people construct tools to enable forms of interaction, memory, and communication (Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theory and sponsorship also share focuses in how Prior describes how individuals and social contexts interact through action:

In activity, *institutions* are made and remade, in part through making certain kinds of people who engage in certain kinds of practices for certain ends, in part through the production of object-ified worlds in which the institution becomes naturalized. However, the social world is also *personalized* as an individual’s particular biographically formed stances, values, and practices are taken up by other people and to varying extents are embedded in cultural resources. Finally, activity involves signs-in-use (linguistic or non-linguistic) that are concrete, historical, and dialogic, signs formed out of the materials at hand and in relation to historical chains of sign use. (p. 55, emphasis in original)

To reinforce themselves, or to be productive, institutions need individuals with the skills and ideological commitments to support their work. As individuals appropriate practices, inject them

with their own styles and practices, and have their efforts recognized and taken up by others, groups of people may begin to re-form institutions they have received and generate new kinds of writing.

Sociocultural theory takes an ideological view of literacy (Street, 1993/2001). The work Scribner and Cole (1981) published after their work with the Vai demonstrated that the effects of literacy learning are specific to the skills involved in practicing each literacy; they do not generalize. From the perspective of sponsorship, I would add that the specific practices the Vai used, and the specific consequences of those practices, were important and available in their culture because they enabled participation in certain economies—for example Koranic literacy and the prestige that brought—and that different economies would have led to the creation of different practices. Leslie Rex’s work about a student she called Kora demonstrated that socially-constructed literacy learning is not always skill based. Kora’s learning was based around her teacher’s *orienting discourses* (2002), which were multiple methods by which the teacher communicated to students the values he wanted them to adopt in order to succeed in his class. She described aspects of that learning as transitioning “from ‘spitting back what the teacher wanted to hear’ to ‘think[ing] things out’” when she wrote (2001, p. 287). Rex placed Kora’s learning as responding to the local context of her work, but from the perspective of sponsorship we can also see her placing her efforts in a broader economy of academic work whose currency is writing that demonstrates the writer’s unique claims. Ideological views of literacy, then, involve both the skills and values that social constructs have developed for literacy practices.

Even authorship takes on a social dimension in sociocultural theories of writing and learning. Prior (2004) traces the numerous ways that teachers can co-author student writing:

To take a familiar example, in this view, every teacher is very actively co-authoring her students' texts, taking up key roles in the production of the text through initiating and motivating it, setting important parameters (the type of text to write, the length, what kinds of sources to use, the timing of the process), and often contributing to content (whether through class discussion or specific response). This role is not diminished because our cultural models of authorship do not acknowledge that teachers co-author their students' texts or because the quality of the text and problems with the text are usually attributed, especially in grades, solely to the student's knowledge or effort. (p. 170-171)

In this view, student language "has been completely taken over, shot through with [the] intentions" of teachers (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293). Sponsorship also acknowledges that students would likely not write as they do if not for specific input from schooled writing practices—practices that can guide students toward organizing arguments in specific ways or focalizing students on margins and word count. As Prior notes, the economy of academic writing predominant in American schooling only acknowledges student authors, which means their positions as academic writers depends on meeting the parameters set forth by their teachers.

**2.2.1.1 Sociocultural positioning and identity** How sponsors construct literacy practices and uses for literacies positions students as certain kinds of people. *Positioning* is a theory of language that is useful in studies with a sociocultural lens (Davies & Harré, 1999; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Positioning involves a "triad" of interactions that occur in speech: *position*, *act-action* (also, *speech act*), and *storyline* (McVee, 2011; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). In conversation, the interaction of interlocutors draws on these three elements in multiple

ways. First, a person, consciously or unconsciously, enters a conversation with a subject position—one of many they enact in the course of any day and one that is most pertinent to the situation of the interaction—which is a way of describing the person’s physical and personality attributes, social standing, perspectives, and “moral order” (Gee, 2001; McVee, 2011; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). The moral order is similar to the concept of role and refers to public aspects of a person’s identity, like profession (McVee, 2011). Positions come with expectations about how someone will interact with others (McVee, 2011).

Teachers position students in classrooms, and position themselves, as they sponsor literacy practices. For example, a teacher that establishes a position as an expert in digital literacies may position her students as novices. Should students' challenge that positioning through talk or action, the students may be positioned as more skilled than the teacher, which would have material effects on how the teacher adapts instruction or assignments. As expectations for positions change through interactions, positions themselves can change (McVee, 2011) or be refined around the specific traits of the person in each position.

Positions are revealed and changed in conversation primarily through the speech act. The speech act can be understood as the function of a person’s talk, particularly in how an interlocutor receives someone’s speech (Davies & Harré, 1999). A teacher may ask a student who has been troublesome in class what her interests are as a prelude to suggesting a topic for a research project and building rapport, which he may consider the speech acts of his conversation opener with her. That student may see the question as a way of “checking up” on her, especially if she has already missed a deadline for beginning the project, or as an attempt at building rapport that is fake and transparent. The student’s response to the question would reveal which



speech act(s) she saw within the teacher's words and the sponsorship they carry. In this way, speech can become constitutive of concrete action (Davies & Harré, 1999).

As speech acts enact positions and changes to positions, the conversation reveals its storyline. On the micro level, each conversation has one or more storyline that arises through the interaction of the interlocutors. However, as with sponsorship, local interactions do not make explicit reference to all the facets of meaning arising in storylines (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; McVee, 2011). Storylines have pre-existing cultural forms developed outside of any one interaction and to which local storylines refer, much like Gee's *Discourses* (2012) or Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's *figured worlds* (1998; Gee, 2011). The storylines of conversations in classrooms reveal intentions of sponsors as they direct student efforts toward specific dialogic orientations for writing practices. Students are to see their positions as supporting important work that prepares them to be productive contributors to economies like state assessment scores, post-secondary academic preparation, or personal fulfillment.

Some users of this method of analysis have incorporated other aspects of interaction, including the use of material objects as symbolic actors in positioning (cf. Leander, 2002). Pairing sponsorship with positioning draws on this logic, as literacy materials can certainly play a role in positioning. For example, tracked schools often have different English Language Arts curricula for each "level." Students in an Advanced Placement class may read novels that they are expected to annotate independently, while students in a general class may read from textbooks that include excerpts of larger work, vocabulary definitions, and plot-based comprehension questions. The presentation of the materials by the publishing companies thus presents the readers/students differently. Teachers may also then position students in classes differently based on how they incorporate the texts into their instruction, perhaps leading to more

open interpretive discussions in the AP class and known-answer conversations like those Cazden and others have identified as Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) in the general class (Cazden, 2001).

From sponsored positions, students relate their desires for writing to what sponsors desire of them. An important addition to the above frameworks, and an element present in Brandt's representation of her interviewees, is how individuals see themselves in relation to their circumstances, societies, and potentials—and not just themselves in relation to how things are but how they could be. Wenger (1998) wrote of learning as becoming competent in the skills related to pursuits that are meaningful to specific communities of practice (p. 4).

Sponsorship as a theory of learning has more in common with Wenger's work with communities of practice than other theories. My reading of Brandt's theory does not align her work with cognitive theories of learning in that learning is not about the evolution of an individual's consciousness (Kegan, 1994) or growth through cognitive stages (Piaget, 1954) but acquiring ways of participating in culturally-mediated literate activities. Participation is the crux of Lave and Wenger's (1991) initial formulation of communities of practice, where they conceive of learning as increasing participation in practices valuable to the aims of groups. Wenger (1998) expanded on this way of thinking about learning by describing multiple ways in which learning shapes both the individual and groups in which the individual participates—and how the shaping of the individual by the group and the group by the individual are inseparable. Where sponsorship diverges from learning as participation in communities of practice is that sponsorship also acknowledges the ways in which groups benefit by shaping the literate activities of their members to specific ends.

Wenger recognized that individuals' identities change through learning and participation in these communities (p. 149). He used three frameworks for describing how belonging to groups influences identity and learning:

*engagement* – active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning

*imagination* – creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience

*alignment* – coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises. (Wenger, 1998, p. 173-4)

Imagination is the aspect of belonging I focus on for this study in order to address students' identity potentials. In relation to literacy learning, and particularly when considering the values attached to literacies by sponsors and the possibilities for appropriation, students' imagination related to literacy and their identity trajectories will enable them to “[expand their] self by transcending [their] time and space and creating new images of the world and [themselves]” (p. 176). Talk involving imagination opens inquiry into identities that are not immediately concrete and yet does not rely on a researcher's speculations. No talk of potential identities can completely avoid conjecture, but employing a framework like Wenger's brings an individual's voice into the process. Students' imagination, whether tied to classroom talk or writing or solicited in interviews, around sponsored writing practices provides insight into the potential for alignment—or appropriation and resistance.

Positions in writing practices constructed by the sponsorship of teachers have implications for identity in sociocultural frameworks. By choice or necessity, students often do not have access provided by teachers to a wide scope of possible literacy schooling, which may include critical writing that interrogates power in social institutions (Beach, Campano, Edmiston,

& Borgmann, 2010; Morrell, 2005) and reflective forms of writing, media literacies, and project-based literacy performances (Beach & Myers, 2001; Duncan-Andrade, 2006). Given few opportunities to practice positions as successful users of multiple literacy modes, those students who find themselves censured around typical school writing could continue to be so in many classroom situations. Spending enough time in any such position increases the likelihood of students' imaginations always containing negative perceptions of themselves as writers (Wenger, 1998), giving rise to the possibility of durable identities as poor writers. Concrete consequences of such identities are low grades and test scores. These effects impact the kinds of courses and post-secondary opportunities students have. Students would also not be as likely to appropriate writing practices when they have been positioned as unsuccessful with them. Research needs to ask how writing opportunities in the classroom create avenues of success for students who are not succeeding in some literacy performances and whether those opportunities are potentially significant enough to affect the students' identity trajectories in that class—with consequences for future classes and academic potentials.

Finally, my analysis of sponsorship recognizes that writing and other literacy practices are important to *enacting* identities and having them recognized by others. The adolescent Native American boy who is the focus of Wilson and Boatright's (2011) study developed a powerful Native identity in a school populated mostly by Whites not because of an Other status but because his teachers afforded the time, resources, and opportunities for him to construct his identity across many literacy modes. He displayed, talked about, and created artifacts of identity (Leander, 2002), like brochures related to aspects of Native culture or events (Wilson & Boatright, 2011, p. 261). He performed traditional dances for classmates (p. 268). He was not especially strong as an academic writer, but he utilized argumentative writing to assert his Native

identity while fulfilling class assignments (p. 267-8). He used literacies to accomplish the identifying he desired, and he identified himself with literacies. In this case, teachers did not sponsor each specific literacy practice the boy used, but they created spaces (Beach et al., 2010) for him to experience positions as a powerful user of literacy practices. He appropriated the sponsorship he had received in other areas of literacy learning, such as tribal dance, and transported it to new contexts and purposes: instead of dance being a way of sharing community within the tribe, he turned it into a form of consciousness-raising for those who did not share his Native identity. His appropriation also changed the economy served by his efforts. He used dances normally reserved for building status and intimacy with his community to earn a position as a successful student in a state-sponsored public school with personal and academic benefits.

Literacy sponsorship as a lens for studying classrooms connects teachers' chosen and dictated modes of instruction about writing practices to student learning and projections of writing potential. Sponsorship asks what values students are receiving from teachers and other sponsors about uses for literacies and the ways learning literacies affects students' views of their future academic, professional, and personal lives. Researchers can observe how resources, planning, and in-the-moment interaction between teachers and students create spaces where practice with literacies occurs. Sponsorship and sociocultural theories of learning, writing, language, and identity are connected inasmuch as sponsorship seeks to create in the sponsored specific ways of representing the self in directed activity toward the sponsor's culturally and economically-contextualized goals. For students, the implications of this sponsorship are assimilating skills and values available in positions as certain kinds of writers. They can use their experiences in these positions to put on, take off, or alter identities that can promote or hinder achievement of academic, personal, and social goals.

### 3.0 METHODS

I designed this study to apply Brandt's theory of sponsorship (1998; 2009) as a lens on a classroom setting. It extended her previous research by pairing reflective interviews with observations of potential sponsorship as it occurred. The study maintained qualitative and interpretivist focuses in order to reflect the paradigms in which Brandt worked while shifting the methodology from an interview study to a participant observation study that used ethnographic methods but reflected my specific interests and questions (Hatch, 2002). In applying sponsorship to a classroom setting, I provide a "complex, detailed narrative" (Hatch, 2002, p. 9) of the writing practices sponsored by a skilled middle-level English language arts teacher and students' appropriation of those practices.

This study addressed the following questions:

- How does a skilled middle-level teacher sponsor multiple writing practices in his English Language Arts classroom, and what practices is he sponsoring? More specifically, what terms of access, ideological freight, and economies do these sponsored writing practices represent?
- How do students appropriate (take up and modify) the writing practices sponsored by their teacher? More specifically, how do students' positions as writers, and their projections of possible writing identities, develop in response to their teacher's sponsorship?

To answer these questions, I observed five instructional units in an eighth grade English language arts classroom from November 2013 to May 2014. In addition to observational data and classroom recordings, I interviewed the teacher before my first observations and after the school year had ended. I also selected five focal students and interviewed each individually shortly before the end of the school year.

### **3.1 PARTICIPANTS**

The participants for this study worked for and attended Troy Middle School in a suburb north of a major Rust Belt city. All place, institution, and participant names are pseudonyms. According to the state department of education school profile for Troy, the population of students was 95% White, 2% African American, and 2% multiracial. The same source labeled 36% of the student population as socioeconomically disadvantaged; however, the school was not eligible for Title I funding. The eighth grade students were not officially tracked by ability, but most students ended up in de facto tracks as a result of enrollment in different levels of mathematics (pre-algebra, algebra, or geometry) and remained with most of the same peers throughout the school day. The unique facet of the class section I observed was that there was greater diversity in ability level than most, with some students identified as gifted and talented and some enrolled in an alternative education program that provided extra academic support.

### **3.1.1 Mr. Royal**

The teacher of these students, Mr. Royal, was a middle-class White male in his late twenties. As he described to me, Mr. Royal was similar to many of the other teachers at his school demographically, who were also primarily White, middle-class, well-educated, and below forty years old. He was a third year teacher with a strong reputation among the faculty of the university from which he earned his teaching degree. I identified him as a skilled teacher in two ways. First, I was his instructor in a methods course and knew him to be engaged with theories of instruction. He articulated connections between theories discussed in class and his own practice from his earliest teaching experiences. Second, we were both fellows of the same local site of the National Writing Project and participated in the Summer Institute for Teachers together. As part of fulfilling the requirements of that workshop, he pursued independent inquiry into uses of cinematic literacy (the study of film and film techniques) for increasing student comprehension and interpretive ability. In his demonstration lesson to share that independent inquiry, I observed that Mr. Royal could clearly explain his intentions and goals for our learning and that he integrated both research and personal interests to engage us as his students. His pursuits marked Mr. Royal as a teacher committed to rigorous instruction in multiple writing practices, an area not well addressed by studies of writing instruction, which tend to focus on single practices like argumentation (cf. Newell, VenDerHeide, & Olsen, 2014).

Mr. Royal's academic studies and personal habits also marked him as an educator with a special commitment to writing. His undergraduate studies were in writing: "I wanted to be a writer growing up, and I was a writing major when I was in college. I didn't take any educational courses" (interview, November 7, 2013). He had only begun to consider teaching near the end of his college years but first worked for a local adult literacy non-profit agency with individuals



attempting to earn their GEDs. That experience prompted him to return to school to pursue a graduate degree and teaching certification, though he still pursued writing in his personal life.

Despite being only a third year teacher, Mr. Royal was the department chair for his school. He attributed that fact to no one else being willing to take the position in the midst of a contentious contract negotiation and eventual teacher strike that delayed the beginning of the school year. One practical result of his position was that he spent the summer before the year of my study rewriting the eighth grade ELA curriculum to align with the Common Core standards for his state with guidance from a consultant hired by the district. He selected new texts for the grade-level, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) and *The Alchemist* (Coelho, 2006), and designed writing assignments to go with the novels—with support in prompt design from colleagues after the start of the year. Mr. Royal taught argumentative writing and research writing in previous years, but they were paired with new texts in the re-written curriculum. He preserved a memoir unit in the new curriculum that was largely the same as the old version.

In addition to his focus as a writing instructor, Mr. Royal incorporated opportunities for students to read, write, and discuss personal issues in his class. In our initial interview, I asked him why he had decided to incorporate personal elements in the curriculum:

(low volume) I don't know. Eighth grade's a really tough time. (normal volume) I think that if you're trying to teach empathy, which is a really hard thing to do, the first place to start is to better understand ourselves and to better understand how our words and our actions affect other people. I mean that's tough for an adult I think to come to terms with, let alone an eighth grade student who's still maturing. So I guess starting there. (interview, November 7, 2013)

Mr. Royal's motivation in his instruction was not purely standards-based or skills-driven. He wanted students to develop traits like empathy and recognized that his curriculum included instruction in values he felt were important. His units and writing instruction presented multiple opportunities for students to see their work as informing personal as well as academic learning.

### **3.1.2 Focal students**

After observing one unit of instruction and engaging in conversations with Mr. Royal, I focused my further observations, artifact collection, and interviews on five focal students out of a class of twenty-six: Blake, Lily, Olivia, Hazel, and Joel. I used the observations from the first unit to identify these five students in the class whose participation in discussions and social interactions spanned a continuum from consistently vocal in academic and social situations to rarely vocal except when called on by the teacher. Student participation in whole group instruction had common patterns of vocal students and quiet students. Mr. Royal frequently asked Blake to record student turns at talk during discussions (see Figure 3.1). The map, created during a discussion of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, demonstrates Mr. Royal's centrality to the discussion as he attempted to guide student comprehension of the novel. Of the focal students in attendance that day, Olivia was the most vocal with at least 13 recorded turns at talk. Blake credited himself with 8 turns. Hazel and Joel were not vocal participants on this day.

About two months later, I recorded participant turns during a discussion of *The Alchemist* (see Figure 3.2). Olivia and Blake were again the most vocal focal students. They also each asked questions in the discussion related to their reading for the day, which was a practice Mr. Royal emphasized because he said it showed that students had prepared for discussion. Hazel and Lily each spoke more than the average student on this day. Joel was again left out.

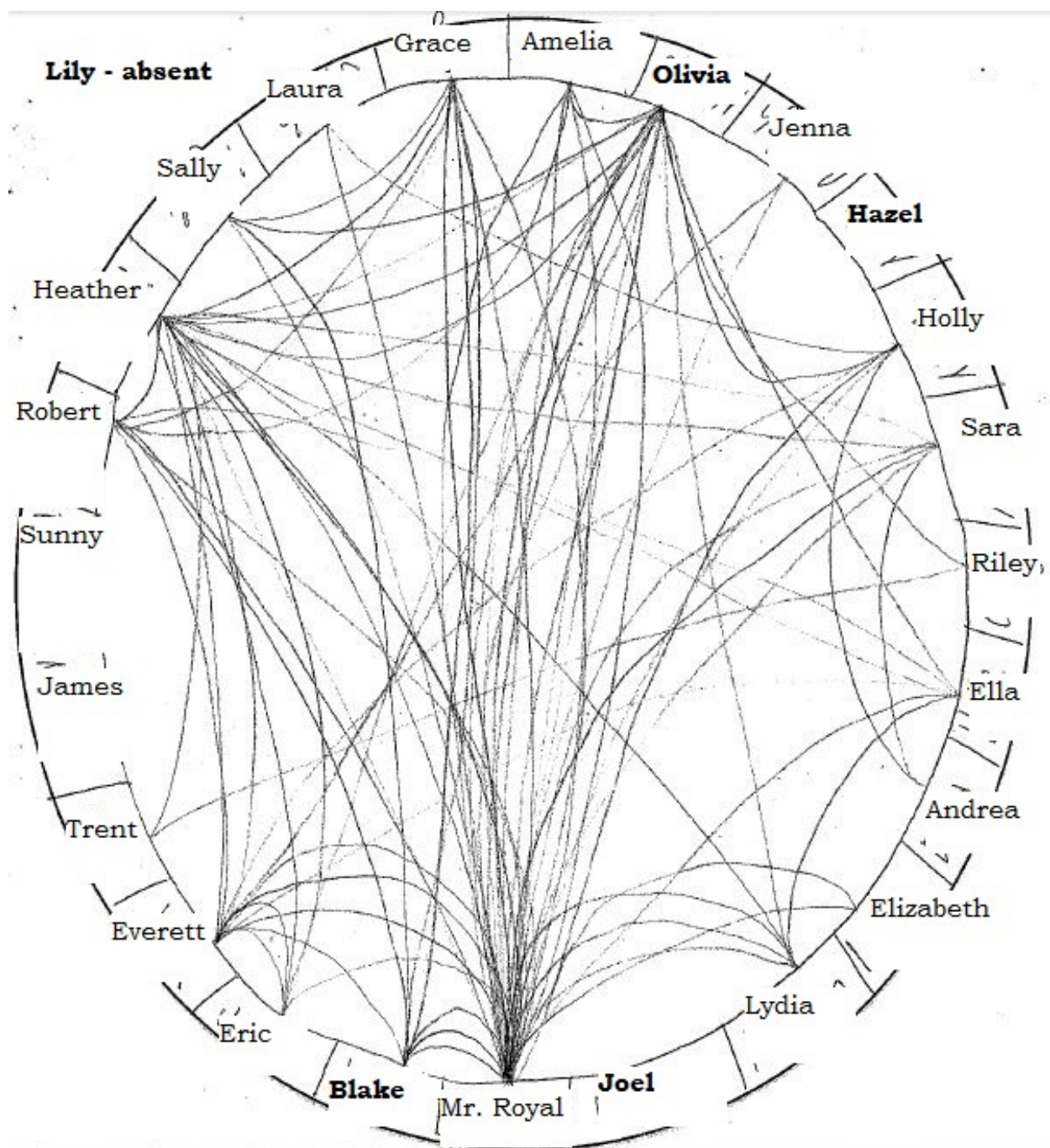


Figure 3.1. Student-Drawn Discussion Map (Focal Students in Bold Type)

<b>Participation turns during discussion February 14, 2014</b>	
<b>Olivia</b>	<b>12</b> (twelfth was a question she asked of the novel)
<b>Blake</b>	<b>8</b> (seventh and eighth were questions he asked of the novel)
<b>Hazel</b>	<b>6</b> (including a response to a known-answer question and an interpretive follow up; her fifth turn was a question meant to help her clarify an aspect of the novel; she was a non-volunteer for her sixth, which regarded her earlier question and became a series of three responses in interchange with Mr. Royal)
<b>Lily</b>	<b>5</b> (her second was an extended summary of a section of the novel)
[No recorded participation in discussion for Joel.]	
Ella	7
Everett	6
Lydia	5
Sara	5
Robert	4
Holly	4 (fourth was a question she asked of the novel)
Riley	3
Laura	3
Grace	3
Sally	2 (non-volunteer for second)
Eric	2
Elizabeth	2 (second was a question she asked of the novel)
Trent	1
Jenna	1
Sunny	1

**Figure 3.2.** Student Participation Turns Recorded in Observation (Focal Students in Bold Type)

After I identified these five students, I asked Mr. Royal for his perceptions of their academic skills, which ranged from grades of A to C and from students enrolled in gifted education and students enrolled in alternative education for extra academic support. All focal students selected their own pseudonyms.

**3.1.2.1 Blake** I selected Blake as a focal student because he seemed to enjoy “favored student” status in the room. He was a constant contributor to class discussions—which almost always required nomination by the teacher. As stated above, Mr. Royal chose him to create the discussion maps and frequently told the whole class Blake was going to be an English teacher some day, a fate he denied wanting. He saw himself as a college-bound student, though he did

not know yet what his goal in college would be. The school hung banners in the hallway announcing honor roll students after the first two grading periods. I asked Blake to describe himself as a student: “I think I’m hardworking, and I try to put my values first before decisions, and I just try. (laugh) It just matters that you tried--doesn’t matter what grade you get” (interview, May 21, 2014). Blake had been in the Troy district his whole life and interacted with both male and female students socially on a daily basis. He identified as “Irish, Norwegian, Dutch, German, and English I believe—a lot of mix.”

**3.1.2.2 Olivia** Olivia, whom I observed to be White, was another constant contributor to class discussions during the reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which Mr. Royal found surprising. He had perceived her to be quiet as a student earlier in the year, so when he mentioned that she had become more talkative around the time my observations began I decided to select her as a focal student. Throughout my observations, she was one of the most vocal students. During a single discussion of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, she took 10 turns in the space of a twenty-minute discussion (fieldnotes, 11/27/13). Nearly three months later, she was still a leading contributor in whole class discussions of *The Alchemist* when she took 12 turns, four more than the next most vocal student Blake (fieldnotes, 2/14/14). Olivia’s name appeared on the “Highest Honors” list on each of the two banners. In her interview, she described herself as “hardworking, athletic, try to do my best even when it’s not the best. That’s basically it. I focus on school a little bit more than social stuff” (interview, May 20, 2014). To my question about what it means to do her best “even when it’s not the best,” she said, “I try even if I know it’s not correct, I’ll try it when I know it’s probably the wrong answer, but I try to make the best of it as I can.” Olivia stated that she focused on school more than social activities, and in my observations she

interacted with peers at times but also had moments in which she read or wrote alone at her desk while most of the rest of the class socialized. She talked about using writing to get in to college, but her professional plans, though still unformed, were not writing-centric.

**3.1.2.3 Lily** Lily was another student whose name appeared on the “Highest Honors” banner twice. She was a frequent contributor to discussions, which was why I selected her as a focal student, though perhaps not as prolific as Olivia or Blake. Lily told me she always strives for, and normally achieves straight A’s:

Yeah I like getting straight A's. I get upset when I get B's. Yeah I try to get everything done earlier, so I don't have to like, you know, be stressed about it the day before.

Favorite subject is math. (interview, May 19, 2014)

Lily talked throughout the interview about her desire to be a lawyer and liked all activities that she could connect to that goal.

I observed Lily to be the only African American student in her class, though not the only African-American in her grade. In our interview, Lily acknowledged that subject matter that foregrounded race could become uncomfortable for her:

I mean I know like--I mean I'm a friendly person, so I've been going to Troy since kindergarten, so I've known people for awhile so I mean. Sometimes it's awkward like when we read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it was kin'a awkward. It was like--I don't know, it was during that time period and then in the book it says the words and stuff but— (lower volume) So awkward.

Lily seemed to suggest that her presence in the district with mostly the same classmates since kindergarten had eased issues of racial difference that might have existed for her as a racial

minority in the school. She did not suggest that reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* caused her peers to treat her differently but that the presence of racial slurs made her feel awkward. I never observed Lily voicing her discomfort to peers or Mr. Royal. She may have felt that the novel was worth reading despite the use of certain words or that the use of such words was necessary for important themes within the story. Alternatively, she may not have felt that saying something would have made a difference or would have positioned her as an outsider to the White culture represented by most of her classmates. She had several close female friends in the class.

**3.1.2.4 Hazel** Hazel selected her pseudonym because she had recently read the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* (Green, 2012). She was an occasional volunteer in discussions, and her name appeared on the “Honors” banner for the first nine-weeks but not the second. I selected Hazel as a focal student because she was not frequently a vocal contributor to discussion but was socially active in the room. She had several close female friends in the class. She considered herself “OK” as a student:

I would say I'm an ok student, I try to study, and I'm like, 'Oh I'm gonna study tonight,' but then I'm like, 'Ugh, I'll study later.' So I kind of lay things off, I'm not a overachiever where I hurry up and do it. I try to even my schedule out, but that never works so I guess I'm an OK student. (interview, May 22, 2014)

She “loved” English class but entered the year as a very reluctant writer. She thought she might want to go to school to be a nurse or a veterinarian, which she did not think involved much writing. She had transferred into Troy but was not new to the district as an eighth grade student. She identified as “a hundred percent Italian.”



**3.1.2.5 Joel** Joel, whom I observed to be White, was a student who received special attention from Mr. Royal, which made him a natural choice as a focal student. He was enrolled in what Mr. Royal called an alternative education program, which seemed to focus on study skills and remediation. He was one of only a handful of students who had not been in the school district since kindergarten, a distinction that provided the impetus for Joel's memoir. His name did not appear on the Honors list banners, and he rarely volunteered in discussions. His participation in whole class settings typically resulted from Mr. Royal calling on him to answer questions, usually for factual responses and at least once after Mr. Royal had prepped with him privately. Mr. Royal also made special efforts to position Joel positively for social purposes, as Joel rarely initiated social interactions himself. Outside of Mr. Royal's classroom, I observed Joel happily talking with a twin brother and other friends. Joel said he spent much of his free time with his brother and friends playing video games; his pseudonym comes from the main character of a game about zombies. He talked about going to school to become a video game designer, specifically someone in charge of creating storylines for games, but he did not talk about the specific writing practices that would help him achieve that goal. When I asked Joel to describe himself as a student, he said, "I'd say I'm pretty good. My grades are OK. A, B, Cs range, and I try my hardest in class, and if I don't understand I ask my brother for help and stuff" (interview, May 29, 2014). Writing was "hard, because I don't read that much--unlike my brother, who reads a lot--and it's hard for me to get focused when I'm writing."

### **3.1.3 Researcher positionality**

I position myself as a participant observer in this study since the researcher is the instrument of data collection in qualitative research (Hatch, 2002, p. 7). I actively recorded fieldnotes during



observations, coded all data, and transcribed interviews and selections of classroom talk myself. I was physically present in the room for all observations and occasionally engaged students in discussion. Socially, students asked me about my interests in sports and commented that they liked some of the equipment I used in creating recordings. I occasionally participated as a second teacher to answer questions students had while writing. These interactions often involved questions of formatting or mechanics and less often involved questions about claims and evidence in essays. Mr. Royal occasionally asked me to provide information about novels or other works he assumed I had read or to give my impressions of the work students did:

Mr. Royal mentions the difficulties of having the kinds of discussions they have been for a big class like this one.

He then says he is the most proud of this class taking risks and asking questions. He reiterates his belief that they are discussing at an 11th or 12th grade level.

He asks students to raise their hands if they think what they are doing with this novel [*To Kill a Mockingbird*] is a new way of reading for them, and all or almost all do.

Mr. Royal asks me to address the students about what I see. I say that everyone I talk to about my work is impressed that 8th graders are reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, that they're doing a great job meeting the challenges of the book, and that I'm pleased.

Mr. Royals says being an English teacher is the best job in the world. (fieldnotes, December 10, 2013)

In all instances of interaction with students but one (see section 5.1.5), I waited for an invitation before speaking unless I was approaching students to set up a camera or other recorder. I identify as a middle-class White male, which means that I shared many cultural traits with Mr. Royal and many of the students in the class. One benefit to my specific focus on sponsorship

was that I used the theory as a means of bracketing any preconceptions I may have had about the students and their learning as a result of our shared cultural characteristics (Hatch, 2002, p. 86). As much as was possible, I attempted to understand the events of the classroom through my application of Brandt's theory.

### **3.2 DATA SOURCES**

I designed the study as a participant observation study in which I chose sources of data to complement the specific purposes and questions necessary for applying Brandt's theory to classroom research (Hatch, 2002, p. 22). I generated data primarily through classroom observations in an effort to observe sponsorship in action. However, my study still employed reflective interviews, which reflected the affordances of Deborah Brandt's life history methodology (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), to incorporate teacher and student interpretations of literacies and the uses and values associated with them. Other data sources supplemented these two data sources.

Implementing research through a lens of sponsorship in classrooms required translations to adapt Brandt's original work to study the effects of sponsorship. First, I took Brandt's work out of the realm of the interview only and added classroom observations. Second, I primarily looked for evidence of developing sponsorship in classrooms, while Brandt's interviews focused on reflections on sponsorship people had received. Third, in order to see the effects of the classroom space on sponsorship as it occurred, I focused on the in-the-moment interactions and relationships between the teacher and students.

### 3.2.1 Observations

Students in schools are in a confluence of influences from multiple stakeholders, and I focused my data collection on observations of writing instruction to ask which sponsors are predominating by looking for the micro-genesis of writing practices. Observational data captured sponsorship as it happened through talk and engagement with writing practices and materials. I observed 79 45-minute instructional periods in Mr. Royal's classroom (59.25 hours). I observed two novel study units. Mr. Royal's *To Kill a Mockingbird* unit began in mid-November 2013 and ended at the December holiday break; I observed 23 periods during this unit (17.25 hours). When students returned from the holiday break in January 2014, Mr. Royal began a memoir writing unit, of which I observed 18 instructional periods (13.5 hours). I observed 13 periods of Mr. Royal's unit on *The Alchemist*, which began on Valentine's Day, February 2014 and ended one month later (9.75 hours). At the conclusion of that unit, he instructed students in both argumentative writing in response to the novel and state assessment preparation. I observed 12 periods of this hybrid unit from mid-March to mid-April (9 hours). The final unit I observed was a research paper unit tied thematically to *To Kill a Mockingbird*; I observed nine periods of this unit in May 2014 (6.75 hours).

**3.2.1.1 Fieldnotes** During all classroom observations, I created fieldnotes in an effort to record events, language, and impressions, primarily from an observer role (Hatch, 2002; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I captured as much detail as I could and recorded observation memos immediately after leaving the classroom each day to mark key moments for later examination and add context to teacher and student (inter)actions. I used the field notes and memos to type more detailed accounts of each class day in research protocols (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Throughout the process of capturing and developing fieldnotes, I was attuned to events and discussions that indicated the skills, values, and attitudes Mr. Royal and students brought to writing practices. Therefore, events that I described first passed through the filter of my theoretical lens.

My research drew on the multiple ways teachers and students interact with writing practices and literacy materials, particularly out of concern for those whose life in the classroom was marginal to the literacies at the core of school sponsorship (cf. Wortham, 2006). My concern for representing students equitably informed my decision to choose focal students for observations. After the first unit of observation, I selected five students who represent a range of participatory structures—some who are highly engaged in predominately whole-class activities and some who remain silent, as described in the previous section. Each day in class in subsequent units, I focused on discussion and events that involved those five students, though I also needed to be aware of how Mr. Royal's constructions of writing practices involved other students in the room. During whole-class activities, my primary goal each day was recording the participation, social interactions, and engagement with literacies of at least one focal student. When small-group and individual classroom activities occurred, I positioned myself to observe at least one focal student.

I acknowledge that my very presence in a classroom altered the classroom environment (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). My goal was to see instruction and learning as it was already occurring. I avoided intervening in classroom instruction but recorded instances in which students or the teacher addressed me for specific purposes or when I occasionally served as a second expert in the room to answer individual students' questions during drafting and typing of

writing. These questions typically involved formatting or issues with Microsoft Word. On one day, those questions involved choice of textual evidence and claims.

**3.2.1.2 Classroom Transcripts** I video recorded all observation days except for two that occurred in the school library. By relying on key episodes identified in fieldnotes, I completed targeted transcriptions of classroom events. I bounded transcript episodes by topic, which was typically determined by Mr. Royal introducing an idea or question and ended when Mr. Royal summarized the episode or moved to an unrelated idea or question. In whole-class discussion in Mr. Royal's class, students raised their hands or gained the floor through his invitation, with few breaches of this pattern. I felt the turn at talk was an appropriate unit of analysis within transcribed episodes given the orderly, rather than open, manner in which Mr. Royal ran discussions.

**3.2.1.3 Artifacts** As part of the observation process, I collected images of student writing and products of the teacher's sponsorship like handouts and text on blackboards. They revealed how individual students, particularly those less active in whole-class discussions, took up or appropriated various facets of sponsored writing practices. For the current analysis, artifacts were used for descriptions of context and practice. I used them as an illustrative supplement to analysis of observations, transcripts, and interviews.

## **3.2.2 Interviews**

Interviews for this study were of three types. The first was a pre-observation study interview with the participating teacher. That interview served to establish context for the teacher's literacy

experiences, beliefs about writing instruction, and other forms of sponsorship present in his relationship with students. For example, I asked him, “What uses for reading and writing do you consider important for your own personal life? Academic life? Professional life?” to understand how he saw different kinds of writing operating in his life, and I asked him what values he wanted students to learn about writing in his classroom. The second type was a post-observation study interview with the teacher to reflect on my analysis of writing instruction and add his perspective to claims of sponsorship I was developing based on the observation data (Appendix A). I asked Mr. Royal about the writing growth he saw in each focal student and asked general questions like, “How do you prepare students to continue to develop as writers after they leave your classroom?” I also asked questions that targeted aspects of my observations and interviews with students, such as “Each student I interviewed mentioned revision as a major piece of their learning. Why do you think that is?” Finally, I conducted similar reflective interviews with the focal students described above to reveal their perspectives on the instruction they were receiving, how they interpreted the writing practices Mr. Royal sponsored, their beliefs about how those writing practices influenced their views on writing and their future writing goals, and the ways in which they appropriated writing they learned in his classroom (Appendix B). I started the interview by asking, “How would you describe yourself as a student?” Most of the interview then focused on questions of what they learned about writing: “What was the goal for the argumentative essay? Why was it important [if it was]?” The protocols borrowed from the topics addressed by Brandt in her research and scripts she has shared in her publications (2009).

Responsive interviewing protocols like those I employed allowed the interview to deviate from a strict script (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2006). I asked follow up questions based on

participant responses that hinted at meanings or important stories and were likely to generate extended talk from participants that contained narratives connected to sponsorship.

The interviews I conducted at the conclusion of the study were reflective in nature, which echoes Brandt's approach. However, I targeted interviews toward specific aspects of instruction that I observed and asked Mr. Royal and the focal students to reflect on a discrete period of time. With the focal students, I was seeking the meaning they made of Mr. Royal's instruction and their writing experiences in terms of their appropriation of writing and projection of uses for writing that hinted at how their literate identities had developed.

Interviews with the teacher and students in my study provided perspectives I could not access through observation alone. The teacher revealed influences on his curricular decisions that arose from his own education experiences and his interpretations of mandates in standards, curriculum, and standardized assessments. Student interviews revealed connections between in-school instruction and out-of-school practices, responses to instruction and sponsored writing practices, and perceptions of the importance of sponsored practices for future purposes.

### **3.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

Analysis of data proceeded in multiple phases. In each phase, I employed both interpretive and inductive coding (Hatch, 2002). Brandt described her analysis as "focusing especially on the people, institutions, materials, and motivations involved in the process" of literacy learning (2009, p. 26). My interpretive analysis therefore applied the same focuses in marking moments where her theoretical aims were evident, particularly instruction about participating in writing practices, learning values attending writing practices, and identifying sources of writing

practices. As with Brandt, my inductive analysis involved grouping specific moments marked by interpretive analysis to construct descriptions of the sponsored writing practices themselves through identifying the dimensions of writing practices sponsored by the teacher and students' activities and talk that revealed how they were taking up, interpreting, and appropriating the practices.

Coding of data began with observations. I first read my typed fieldnotes, which totaled 120 pages of data, and conducted a round of open inductive coding in which I identified how the life and talk of the classroom identified and encoded skills, values, and responsibilities to construct writing practices and positions attending those practices over time. The first decisions involved identifying the kinds of writing and composing that Mr. Royal asked students to do in his classroom. I identified 12 distinct types of writing across 79 observation days and charted their relationship to instructional units (see Figure 3.3). I coded 67 instructional approaches to writing in Mr. Royal's classroom, which I used to describe how his instructional practices structured writing sponsorship in each unit of instruction.

As I analyzed how Mr. Royal instructed students in types of writing, I began coding for constructions of skills, values, and purposes associated with different types of writing. My coding of observations, interviews, and classroom excerpts aligned around features of language suggested by my reading of Brandt's work. When she reported speech from her interviewees, she privileged their descriptions of people that trained them or served as models, aspects of practices and materials that constituted learning, and affective statements related to literacy learning. For example, she used this lengthy quote from a woman who worked as a secretary:

[My boss] didn't just write to write. He wrote in a way to make his letters appealing. I *would have to* write what he was writing in this magazine too. *I was completely*



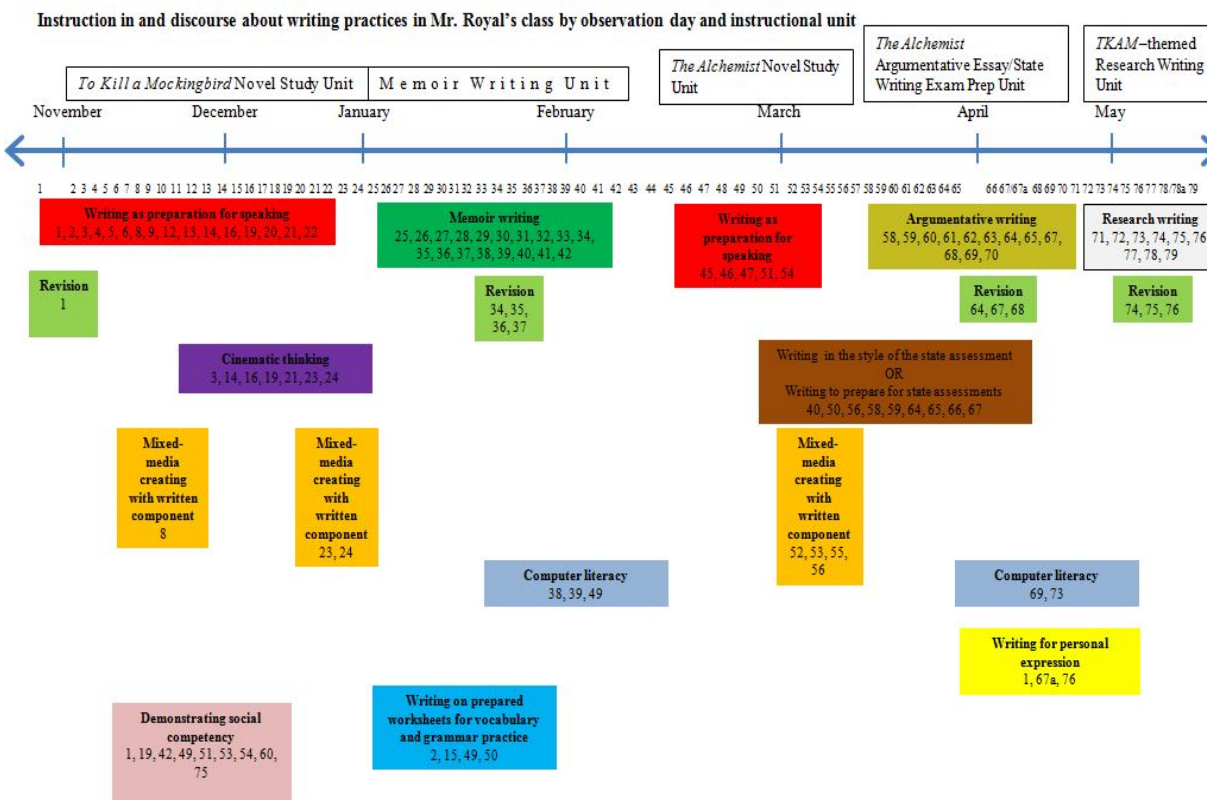


Figure 3.3. Types of Writing by Observation Day and Instructional Unit

*enthralled*. He would write about the people who were in this [organization] and the different works they were undertaking and people that died and people who were sick and about their personalities. And he wrote little anecdotes. Once in a while I made some suggestions too. He was a man who would listen to you. (Brandt, 2009, p. 42, emphasis added)

From examples like this one, I pulled three principles for analysis. First, in coding I looked for descriptions of writing practice—what writing is, how it is performed, and how individuals or groups write. Part of that coding involved description of the person or entity involved in learning writing, but such descriptions were not always clearly attributed as in the above example (“My boss”) and instead relied on pronouns without antecedents, known as deixis (Gee, 2011). It was important for me to examine statements that included deixis, because they could

have hinted at constructions of abstract sponsors. During observations, I made note of statements that involved deixis. During interviews, I attempted to press participants on who was represented by these unattributed pronouns, which often referred to abstractions of who wanted them to teach writing or write in specific ways. Still, the use of deixis indicated that sponsors beyond the immediate teacher and student interactions were involved in the classroom. Second, I looked for modals (“would have to”) that indicated how individuals represented choices and obligations related to writing practices and the ends to which they saw their instruction or writing leading. Finally, I focused on affective statements (“I was completely enthralled”). In these statements, participants connected their senses of self, abilities, and affinities to aspects of writing instruction and practice. Affective statements project engagement, alignment, and imagination with sponsored practices (Wenger, 1998). These three special focuses in my coding allowed me to analyze the ways in which students responded to the teacher as sponsor and the ways in which students and the teacher responded to distal sponsors.

In this second round of analysis that drew on these focuses and other constructions of skills, values, and purposes of writing, I identified another 66 emergent codes that I organized as themes to generate coding categories related to my reading of Brandt (see Appendix C). Emergent codes related to type of instruction frequently crossed writing type, while those associated with values, skills and habits, responsibilities, and appropriation or resistance did so much less frequently. I transferred all codes from observations to a common spreadsheet that was organized by writing type.

I conducted a round of open coding on all interviews using the above focuses as guides and generating emergent codes for each. I again organized the emergent codes into themes from my coding categories (see Appendix C). For example, when Mr. Royal talked about one focal

student's desire to be a lawyer in our post-research interview, I assigned the emergent code *being a good reader in order to be a good writer*:

Yeah I had to tell her reading is very important--critically reading, if you're going to be a lawyer, and you know it's important that you start those reading skills now--so for her I think maybe seeing the value of being a good reader in order to be a good writer too.  
(interview, August 19, 2014)

The emergent code fit within the theme of **Value of a Sponsored Writing Practice** because Mr. Royal's statement indicated a belief that students needed to take on in order to succeed with the conception of the relationship between reading well and writing well that he set out.

I compiled all emergent codes from interviews and observations to compare and triangulate themes. By looking across data types, I could more clearly draw connections between Mr. Royal's sense of his beliefs and goals as stated in interviews and the ways he talked about writing and created writing experiences through his instruction. I could also compare student comments about their development, interests, and plans as writers with emphases from instruction and Mr. Royal's beliefs. Through the comparison of codes across participants and data types, I organized constellations of data into sponsored *writing practices*. I then reorganized data with the writing practices as the top level codes and aligned data points by type (observation or interview) and participant (teacher or one of the focal students) under them. The names of the practices came from my interpretations of central messages Mr. Royal conveyed in connection with each one.

Transcription of key classroom events was the final step of analysis. I selected episodes to transcribe from codes from the observational data that were illustrative of central concepts from sponsored writing practices. Given the centrality of the five focal students to my

observations, most transcripts feature one or more of them and serve to characterize the contributions and participation habits of those students in the classroom. Coding within the transcripts again draws on focuses derived from Brandt's work and codified in the scheme (Appendix C).

The last step of defining the writing practices involved selecting those around which Mr. Royal's instruction and student attention coalesced in meaningful ways and summarizing the data aligned with each. Figure 3.3 demonstrated that Mr. Royal used at least 12 different kinds of writing in his classroom. When I applied my reading of Brandt's theory, only six rose to the level of sponsored practices that could meet the criteria of the definition (see Figure 3.4). I define sponsored writing practices by a) the positions (Davies & Harré, 1998) available to their practitioners, typically "writers" or "students" in this study; b) the "terms [of] access" to a practice (Brandt, 2009, p. 25), which are the skills and means by which a student had to display their competency with a practice in order to be counted successful; c) the "ideological freight" of a practice (p. 27), which are the values and beliefs students were expected to take up in order to be counted successful; and d) the "economies" served by the practice (p. 25), which indicate to what ends students' efforts went, how students were to see the purposes for their writing, and the benefits derived by Mr. Royal or other sponsors.

**Table 3.1.** Summarized Definitions of the Writing Practices Mr. Royal Sponsored

Writing Practice	Positions	Terms of Access	Ideological Freight	Economies
Read with a writer's sensibility	writers	Read and be able to discuss professional and teacher or student-created fiction and creative non-fiction that are strong models to learn how to craft writing of one's own that is strong in the same elements	Writers read to become better writers	Growing in social and emotional maturity; school evaluations through state assessment scoring
Share your story	writers	Writing a nuanced non-fiction narrative that is strong in sensory details, voice, tone, place, and earned themes	Writing reveals the self to others and writers must be willing to be revealed; narratives require the writer to challenge him or herself to tell personally meaningful stories	Growing in social and emotional maturity
Use writing to challenge your thinking and mature	writers	Choosing to write about and research challenging and adult topics; expressing opinions appropriately in writing	Writing generates new ideas; writing is a medium for thought; the best writing is serious	Growing in social and emotional maturity; high school and post-secondary academic expectations
Argumentative writing is a formula	students; writers	Writing analytical thesis statements that make a claim and contain subordinating conjunctions; a claim, evidence, and reasoning formula; writing counterarguments	Arguments consist of claims, evidence, and reasoning	College and career readiness standards; high school and post-secondary academic expectations; professional (business and legal) writing (students)
State assessment writing is a formula	students	Writing analytical thesis statements that make a claim and contain subordinating conjunctions; a claim, evidence, and reasoning formula; writing counterarguments; creating a pre-writing chart	Pre-writing is the most important part; write what you already know about	School evaluations through state assessment scoring; college and career readiness standards
Good writers revise everything	writers; students	Revising every sentence of a piece of writing through attention to weak words, weak verbs, repetitive pronouns, and genre-specific elements	Writing can always be improved; good writers take enough time to revise every sentence	High school and post-secondary academic expectations; growing in social and emotional maturity (students)

#### **4.0 TEACHER'S SPONSORSHIP OF WRITING PRACTICES**

In keeping with Brandt's definition of sponsorship (1998; 2009), I define writing practices as acts that involve meeting terms of access, or the use of specific skills, put toward ideologically defined ends in one or more economies. Thus, the writing practices I name that occurred in Mr. Royal's classroom reflect the ideological freight, or values embedded in them, as well as the means of production involved. For each writing practice, I describe how Mr. Royal constructed its purpose by aligning it with terms of access, positions (the type of person who would use them), the economies they support, and the ideological freight their users should accept (see Table 3.1). Purposes for employing literacy practices include the reasons, incentives, and goals for working within a sponsored writing practice. The terms of access of a literacy practice are those discrete skills that must be learned, mastered, and applied in order to successfully wield the sponsored way of writing. Throughout discussions of the types of people who would use a practice, I rely on positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1999). Positioning analyzes the discursive and interactional production of roles that interlocutors negotiate, accept, and reject in a similar relationship to sponsors and their sponsored. The economies of literacy practices are those larger social movements that benefit from the writing actions of the sponsored—and that promise benefit as well. Finally, the ideological freight of a writing practice is the explicit or implicit value(s) embedded in the practice—one or more ways of seeing how writing interacts with the course of a person's life.

I have organized findings from this study in the following way: Chapter 4 presents findings focused on how Mr. Royal sponsored writing practices in his classroom. I provide a brief overview of the instructional units through which Mr. Royal sponsored writing practices and major modes of instruction he employed. I then examine six major writing practices that he sponsored within and across instructional units. Using analysis of observations, classroom talk, and interviews with the teacher, I examine how his sponsorship constructed the following writing practices:

- read with a writer's sensibility,
- share your story,
- use writing to challenge your thinking and mature,
- argumentative writing is a formula,
- state assessment writing is a formula, and
- good writers revise everything.

Chapter 5 presents students' responses to the sponsored writing literacy practices.

As the local agent of instruction in the classroom, Mr. Royal sponsored multiple writing practices. His choice of curriculum influenced many of the genres through which students learned sponsored writing practices. His choice of instructional modes influenced the ways in which students could demonstrate ways they were taking up, modifying, and appropriating practices. His interactions with students revealed values he attached to writing practices and the economies in which they were valued.

## 4.1 OVERVIEW OF INSTRUCTION

In this section, I provide a summary of the objectives and modes of instruction of the five instructional units in Mr. Royal's class that I observed (see Figure 4.1). When considering how Mr. Royal as a sponsor provided access to writing practices, it is important to recognize how the structure of the class and instructional time privileged some kinds of practices over others.

**Table 4.1.** Writing Practices by Unit of Instruction

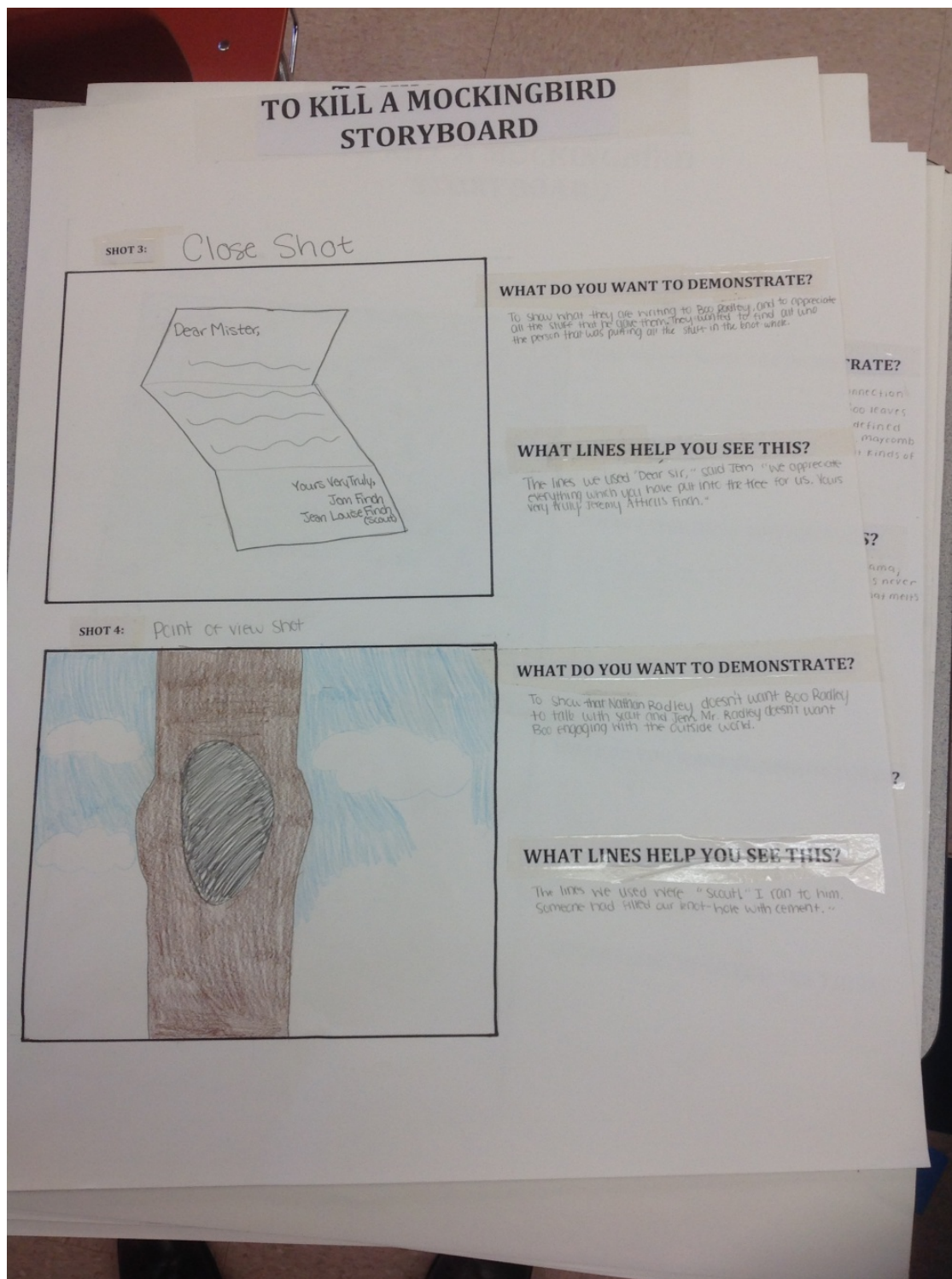
Unit	Instructional Modes	Major and Final Products	Major Writing Practices
Reading <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Teacher-led whole class literature discussion (~3/week); independent informal writing; small group project	Extended definition essay (planned but abandoned because of time); small-group story board of a scene from the novel	Use writing to challenge your thinking and mature; read with a writer's sensibility – cinematic thinking
Memoir Writing	Teacher-led whole class literature discussion targeting aspects of professional and student models; independent drafting and revising; conferences; peer review	A three-page memoir	Read with a writer's sensibility; share your story
Reading <i>The Alchemist</i>	Teacher-led whole class literature discussion (~3/week); independent informal writing; small group project	A two-page argumentative literary analysis essay; small-group "scrapbook" of symbols from the novel	Argumentative writing is a formula; use writing to challenge your thinking and mature
State Assessment Preparation	Teacher-led whole class discussion and practice; direct instruction; independent practice	State writing assessment	State assessment writing is a formula
Research Writing	Independent research, drafting, and revising; teacher-led whole class discussion	A three-page research paper	Use writing to challenge your thinking and mature

Mr. Royal's goals for the unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird* were for students to read a challenging text and use various forms of writing to develop their understanding of the novel. Mr. Royal planned for his unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird* to culminate with an extended definition essay, but he cancelled it when he ran out of time. A small group project he had planned became the de facto final outcome of the unit. Related to the *read with a writer's*



*sensibility* practice, Mr. Royal taught students to look at texts as a film director would, noticing visual details and how language frames scenes to help the reader picture the events and pick up on the tone being created for the story. He called this way of studying texts “cinematic thinking” and had students show they could employ that practice through a storyboard (see Figure 4.2). A storyboard is a visual sketch of a director’s vision for how to compose a camera shot. Mr. Royal added school elements to the storyboards students produced by having them write the purpose for the shot (what it was supposed to communicate to the audience) and lines from the novel that inspired their choices. Mr. Royal’s sponsorship of cinematic thinking was a first glimpse of how he asked his class to move from a position of being students, passively accepting learning selected for them, to being writers, agents of production who could find creative possibility within their reading and discussion. *Read with a writer’s sensibility* received even greater attention in the unit that immediately followed *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Mr. Royal’s memoir unit introduced the final goal early: students were to write a non-fiction story about an important event in their lives. The beginning of the unit focused on *read with a writer’s sensibility* as students looked at model texts for how they conveyed aspects of a writer’s craft, like strong sensory details, appropriate tone, and drawing themes naturally out of the narrative itself. Mr. Royal signaled students’ growing agency by telling them that they were becoming more and more responsible for leading discussions about texts they read, that they knew what they were looking for and how to analyze the craft of their readings. Instruction shifted toward *share your story* as he led students through the writing process he had laid out for this unit. Mr. Royal’s description of the purposes for writing memoirs drew more heavily on conceptions of a broader audience than any other major writing assignments I observed. He held formal conferences with every student, and it was the only unit in which students engaged in



**Figure 4.1.** Example of a Storyboard

peer review—both as a whole class reading one peer’s work and with partners. Mr. Royal’s sponsorship through memoir writing communicated the ideological freight of exposing oneself through writing. Students experienced multiple means of doing so (conferences and peer review) before they turned in the final versions of their narratives.

In the unit on *The Alchemist*, Mr. Royal’s objective was for students to write an argumentative essay. This unit’s final project focused on *argumentative writing is a formula*. While the purpose of argument writing in Mr. Royal’s curriculum was to have students display their understanding of the novel, he paired instruction in argument with preparation for state assessment writing, which I identified as the *state assessment writing is a formula* practice. Mr. Royal positioned the study of *The Alchemist* and argumentative writing immediately before students took the state tests, which allowed him to have his students’ competency in this kind of writing tested while they were still used to writing in that way. In fact, Langer found that the most effective teachers in her study of 25 urban and suburban schools integrated test preparation into their curriculum in similar ways (2001, p. 857). Most of Mr. Royal’s test preparation took this form, as he applied most of the aspects of writing that he connected to students’ essays on *The Alchemist* to his instruction on state assessment writing as well. He also prepared students for the assessments in other ways that stood separately from the unit on *The Alchemist*, which typically involved students reading practice tests and answering multiple-choice questions. Mr. Royal’s main efforts to differentiate argumentative and state assessment writing practices involved teaching all aspects of his normal writing process for the argumentative essay, which included significant revision, and a process for state assessment writing that relied on pre-writing strategies with no revision.

Finally, in the research unit, Mr. Royal's focus was on having students explore a topic related thematically or historically to *To Kill a Mockingbird* (i.e. Jim Crow Laws, the Great Depression, or jazz music). Student completed most of their researching and drafting work independently with Mr. Royal working with them individually as needed. The primary focus of Mr. Royal's sponsorship was *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature*, which was also part of the two novel studies. Mr. Royal was able to use the individual attention he gave students as an opportunity to help them process new information that surprised them or took a perspective that differed from their own. In this way, Mr. Royal allowed students to try out new ideas with him before committing them to a formal paper in order to succeed in this writing practice.

In all units, whole class instruction predominated, even in writing units. Whole class instruction occurred in 55 of 79 observations (70%). During units focused on extended writing projects, Mr. Royal's typical pattern was to introduce a topic in a whole class setting, lead a brief whole class discussion, and release students to independent work (while he circulated to students or held conferences at his desk). Mr. Royal's instruction in these times involved frequent exchanges with students where he posed questions that students answered and which he then re-voiced or elaborated (Cazden, 2001). Students were nominated to speak through hand-raising, meaning students who volunteered frequently were most likely to be participants in instructional interactions. Of the focal students, Joel was the least likely to volunteer. More frequently, Mr. Royal called on him to answer a factual question—one that would have a right answer and did not require him to have an opinion or interpretation about a text. Mr. Royal used whole class instruction to communicate values attending the writing practices he sponsored and guide practice using the terms of access to those practices. For example, one of the most important practices, and one that received the most time across the school year, was *good writers revise*

*everything*. In whole class situations, Mr. Royal frequently used his position at the front of the room and as the major object of attention to preach that students needed to take the time necessary to use the revision process he taught on every sentence of their papers. He also never released them to independent revision work without first guiding them through the revision process with a sample paragraph from a student or of his own creation. Mr. Royal's sponsorship through direct instruction, then, primarily took the form of direct statements of the ideological freight students needed to accept to perform successfully and low-stakes opportunities to demonstrate adherence to values and competence with practices through answering questions and following along with guided practices.

Independent writing was common to all units as well and occurred in 45 of 79 observations (57%). In 21 of 79 observations (27%), he had students write to informal assignments that asked for students to interpret passages they had read or that raised thematically-related issues. The assignments were not graded, but most had a purpose statement written in a box at the top of the page: "The purpose of informal writing is to document thinking, communicate ideas and discoveries with others, articulate your personal feelings toward *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and increase participation in the literature circle." The independent writing lasted for an average of 10 minutes. Informal writing assignments were important to the writing practice *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature*. Similarly to what he did with the research writing, Mr. Royal asked students to try out ideas and perspectives in private writing that even he did not always read. Those students who felt confident in their ideas could share them in discussion; those students who did not have the same confidence would not share, which would mean they were unable to test their ideas with others involved in the same writing practices as them.

In 24 of 79 observations (30%), Mr. Royal had students use independent writing time for planning, drafting, or revising larger projects. Independent writing of this type lasted from 10-15 minutes to the entire period of 42 minutes. In every instance in which he set aside the whole period for independent writing, Mr. Royal engaged students in formal or informal conferences at his desk or at the students' desks. For as much as he seemed to desire to position students as writers capable of their own decision making and himself as a support for their needs, the structure of school intruded. Students may have recognized that they were not writing as professional writers do. Bells governed their writing time. They shared their writing space with twenty-five other people. Still, Mr. Royal provided frequent and purposeful opportunities for students to write for extended periods of time, which could have communicated that writers have goals for each part of the process and devote significant resources of time and energy to their work.

## **4.2 SPONSORED WRITING PRACTICES**

In this section, I examine each of the six major writing practices that Mr. Royal sponsored in his class. I draw on observations, excerpts of classroom talk, and interviews with him to examine how his sponsorship constructed terms of access, ideological freight, and economies for each writing practice—and how his instruction revealed the influence of distal sponsors.

#### 4.2.1 Read with a writer's sensibility

One of the major writing practices that Mr. Royal sponsored was to *read with a writer's sensibility*. To *read with a writer's sensibility* was to focus reading on elements of the author's craft as instructive of the kind of writing for which the reader is preparing. In Mr. Royal's class, this literacy practice occurred primarily during his instruction for memoir writing. Students gained access to this literacy practice through reading short stories and excerpts of his choosing that modeled specific elements of narrative writing skill that he wished the students to emulate: poems for sensory details, *The Diary of Anne Frank* for voice and tone, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* for symbolism, and "Working at Wendy's" for well-developed themes and finding the story within a story. Reading as writers was not limited to published texts. While Mr. Royal had students study professionally written texts for single purposes in the curriculum, students analysis of all of the curricular goals related to a writer's craft to read memoirs from previous years' students, the teacher, and classmates.

Students first engaged in this practice through class discussion. As students quietly read a student memoir, Mr. Royal circulated the room and announced, "If you can find the strengths, you'll be a better writer. If you can find the weaknesses, you'll be a better writer" (observation, January 10, 2014). While I found his statement to be a perfect encapsulation of his goal for this literacy practice, at this stage of instruction students were not engaged in writing: they had to first show mastery through how they talked about what they had learned about writing through reading. On a day when students read a previous student's memoir silently in class, Mr. Royal prepared them for discussion by reminding them of his desired focus for their critiques (see Appendix D for transcription conventions):

1. Mr. Royal: When we're talking, we're trying to look beyond things like grammar and



comma splices. If you found the grammar errors, if you found the spelling errors, that makes me happy, but [...] but as far as the purpose of our conversation goes we're looking for bigger ideas: sensory details, imagery, voice, things like that. Uh let's start off with the strengths and uh when you're talking try to give us an example. So you like a line, you think she uses a sensory detail really well, read us that line. Show us where it is. Let's talk about strengths. {Lily has her hand raised.} What's working well in this paper? What do we like about it? {Several other students have raised their hands.} Sorry I got ahead of myself – Joel, does she establish place early in the paper?

Mr. Royal sets out the terms of access in this episode: finding “bigger” things in the writing, which correspond with the focuses he established for the practice. One skill involved in finding the right parts of a paper was to name and locate strengths, and later weaknesses, in the paper. Mr. Royal’s decision to stop himself from calling on others and instead nominate Joel, who was not volunteering, changed the expectation for the terms of access for Joel. Joel was not going to name a strength that he brought up himself. Mr. Royal’s question served to establish a specific potential strength or weakness that he already knew Joel could find. As the students had been reading the student memoir independently, with a sheet of guiding questions based on Mr. Royal’s focuses, he had approached Joel to discern how far he had been able to read and if he had been answering any of the questions. Mr. Royal calling on Joel here indicated that he was making a pre-planned move that essentially re-played their private conversation:

2. Joel: Yes

3. Mr. Royal: Where are we?



4. Joel: Um the first, the couple--first couple sentences?
5. Mr. Royal: Ye—where are, where does the story take place?
6. Joel: The West Virginia mountains
7. Mr. Royal: OK good. In the first two lines, she says we're in the woods hiking in West Virginia. Good.

Mr. Royal wanted students to use their reading to discover that good writers establish place in the first lines of a narrative. His exchange with Joel allowed Joel to demonstrate that he could find where the student author had done just that. Mr. Royal helped Joel find public success in the *read with a writer's sensibility* practice by adapting the terms of access to his sense of Joel's needs. While students sitting in Mr. Royal's classroom had ostensibly the same access to the practices he sponsored, as a teacher he recognized a need to draw students into the practice in ways that were appropriate for each of them.

Shortly after the exchange with Joel, Mr. Royal returned to inviting students to participate in the practice through independently finding the strengths of the writing:

11. Mr. Royal: OK, Lily, start us off. What's something you liked about the paper?
12. Lily: Um the sensory details. The sentence goes [Lily reads a sentence from the paper].
13. Mr. Royal: Mmhmm. [Mr. Royal reads an earlier line and a portion of the same line Lily read.] That's an excellent introduction. I like those too. Um Holly.
14. Holly: Um I don't have a specific line, but like throughout her story um she uses like synonyms. So instead of saying like big, she'll say humongous, or she like kind of um has a variety of words that she uses to describe something.

15. Mr. Royal: She absolutely does. Good. I think words like glistening are nice in here.

Yeah.

Lily and Holly's responses demonstrated adherence to the practice in a different way than Joel did. They nominated the aspects of the paper that were strengths, whereas Mr. Royal directed Joel to a paper element. Lily employed a term common to Mr. Royal's construction of *read with a writer's sensibility* ("sensory details") and connected that marker to a line from the student paper. Mr. Royal recognized that Lily's use of the term "sensory details" signaled she had taken up a concept from their reading and could employ it. Mr. Royal positioned students as writers in this practice, because their reading served the purpose of preparing them to improve their narrative writing. From that position, they encountered the storyline of writers reading to find the strengths and weaknesses of other writers. Though Lily and Joel each participated in the storyline by finding strengths in the paper, Lily did so through a different means than Joel (volunteering versus being selected to answer a question). In turn 14, Holly attempted to extend beyond Mr. Royal's focuses by introducing the term synonyms. Mr. Royal ratified her contributions as well, which signaled that Holly had also read as a writer. Final evidence of learning the literacy practice would come from Joel, Lily, Holly, and all students demonstrating the ability to turn their reading into writing by incorporating the focuses from their reading (sensory details, tone, voice, setting, and earned themes) into their written memoirs. As the sponsor, Mr. Royal established that students could meet the terms of access through their own efforts or with assistance from him, always conveying to them that the goal of reading well was to improve writing.

The *read with a writer's sensibility* literacy practice positioned Mr. Royal's students as writers. He addressed them as writers capable of finding literary elements in the work of other

writers and applying them to their own narratives. In the position of writer, they demonstrated learning through writing strong narratives that drew on their previous reading. For the writers in Mr. Royal's class, success in this area of appropriating elements of reading into writing took multiple forms. As students discussed their peer Lydia's paper, they referenced multiple ways in which her memoir drew on what she learned from reading:

Mr. Royal begins the whole class discussion by asking for strengths.

Ella says the sensory details. Mr. Royal asks for an example. Ella points out one in the first paragraph.

Amy says Lydia is "good at setting place" and reads an example. Mr. Royal says he loves that line. (observation, February 4, 2014)

Lydia's abilities as a writer were positioned favorably for her incorporation of those elements that were central to *reading as a writer*. When Mr. Royal asked for weaknesses, Lydia's writing was again compared to what she should have learned from her reading, as when Olivia remarked that her conclusion could have used more sensory details.

Not all of the skills students learned to apply to their writing from their reading were the ones Mr. Royal intended (i.e. learning to identify and then use strong sensory details). In one of the student models that Mr. Royal produced for the class, students noticed the use of asterisks (\*\*\*) to denote the passage of time between two story events. When I began observing student drafts while they typed in the computer lab, I noticed at least six of the 26 students had appropriated asterisks for their memoirs:

Olivia, Sally, and Amy's stories all have "\*\*\*\*" (asterisks) for breaks like the student example narrative the class workshopped. Lydia and Grace do too. Grace has been fighting with Microsoft Word's attempts to auto-format the asterisks into a whole line.

Ella is using [asterisks] and had the same issue as Grace, but she figured out how to “undo” the auto-formatting. Ella’s handwritten draft has asterisks between four consecutive paragraphs. (observation, January 30, 2014)

The case of the asterisks demonstrates that, when presented with a clear reason to connect their reading and their writing, students in Mr. Royal’s class expanded their appropriation of elements from reading into writing in ways beyond the core practices he explicitly taught.

Accepting the position of writer offered by the *read with a writer’s sensibility* literacy practice also required that students accept Mr. Royal’s construction of the purpose for reading being to develop as a writer. Given that these students were scheduled to take standardized state assessments two months after this lesson, Mr. Royal could have framed reading for literacy elements like sensory details and voice as *read to learn how to score well on state assessments*. In his post-research interview, he referenced *read with a writer’s sensibility* as aligning with Common Core standards and curricular goals:

I mean I read and reread and reread every single standard from sixth, seventh, and eighth grade when I was on curriculum counsel a year ago. Things that really stood out to me that I thought I already did or thought were important that I saw in Common Core were things like sensory details. I mean, there are specific standards on using sensory details. I think I emphasize things that are, or standards that I think are personally meaningful for the kids. So I’m sure there are standards I ignore or didn’t get to obviously. (interview, August 19, 2014)

Mr. Royal’s experience writing curriculum meant that he felt fully immersed in standards and curricular goals. However, Mr. Royal did not teach them as discrete, decontextualized skills or texts. Each focus or text served to prepare students to write memoirs in specific ways, and he

selected them because they could help students make meaningful connections to the reading and writing they were asked to do. As an abstract sponsor of writing practices, standards influenced some of Mr. Royal's decisions about what parts of a writer's craft to teach (i.e. sensory details). However, he masked their influence in most of his work with the class around *read with a writer's sensibility*, because he selected standards that he felt students would find personally meaningful. He seemed to feel that might be justification enough in the minds of students.

Mr. Royal's goals for having students read as writers seemed to direct students' efforts toward an economy of growing in social and emotional maturity. In this economy, students used their literacy work to build experiences with ways of seeing themselves and relating to others that would be recognized as adult perspectives on the world. For *read with a writer's sensibility*, that included being critical readers who could understand how to identify and use elements of a writer's craft to wrestle with mature themes. If students were going to turn what they learned from reading into writing stories from their lives, he said, he wanted that reading to focus on aspects of the writer's craft that were meaningful to them. As I will discuss in the next section, Mr. Royal challenged students during the memoir writing to select events that were important moments in their lives, which would test their abilities and willingness to expose potentially scary parts of their histories to him and their peers. Students who used the preparation for that task that he offered through *read with a writer's sensibility* would have tools to facilitate their personal growth. Earning currency in this economy allowed students to demonstrate that they were prepared for adult challenges that they would face in high school academic and personal situations and beyond.

On the days in which I observed this writing practice, there was only one instance in which Mr. Royal discussed connections between *reading with a writer's sensibility* and state

assessments. On the first day of the memoir unit that I observed, and with my camera turned off at his request, Mr. Royal talked to the students about the connections between their work and state assessments:

Mr. Royal told me before class started that he met with the assistant principal this morning to discuss assessment data from last year for his current group of students.

He addresses the class and connects the skills they covered in class over the last couple of days [of reading, i.e. sensory details] and will cover over the next few days and what they did with *To Kill a Mockingbird* and “tearing that text apart every day” to what they will be required to know and do on the state assessments. He tells them, “You need these skills for the [state assessments] and for other classes as well.” (observation, January 6, 2014)

I question whether this specific interaction with students would have occurred absent that morning’s meeting with an administrator who seemed to have stressed the importance of Mr. Royal’s students scoring highly on the state assessment in order to promote the school’s public standing and evaluation. In fact, I recorded no further mentions of standards, assessments, or future classes connected to the *read with a writer’s sensibility* literacy practice directed at Mr. Royal’s eighth period students. The primary economy addressed by Mr. Royal with eighth period, then, was growing in social and emotional maturity. Yes, students could transfer knowledge from *read with a writer’s sensibility* to assessments, but the primary reason Mr. Royal sponsored students in reading as a writer was for students to develop sensitivity to how narrative elements work together to communicate important messages about human experience.

**4.2.1.1 Cinematic thinking** A related literacy practice that closely tied reading and composition was what Mr. Royal termed cinematic thinking. Instruction in this literacy occurred near the end of the reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, culminating in a filmic storyboard project. Mr. Royal also raised the topic of cinematic thinking in support of the *read with a writer's sensibility* literacy as he referenced the language of camera shots in helping students read for place and tone in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. He also specifically instructed students to look for the camera shots he taught while watching television:

[Mr. Royal] and the class talk about crime shows as examples. Ella talks about the shots used to show crime scenes. Robert mentions the close ups of evidence specifically.  
(observation, December 12, 2013)

In this literacy practice, student-writers were positioned as potential creators of visual storytelling if they could interpret how writers used language to generate imagery and mood in the same way that directors frame camera shots to communicate mood through images. It was an avenue for him to show students that their media consumption outside of the classroom could be informed by the instruction they received from him. On its own, cinematic thinking was a minor aspect of Mr. Royal's instruction, but its similar construction to *read with a writer's sensibility* demonstrated Mr. Royal's concern for equipping students with skills to interpret and participate in narratives in their worlds.

## **4.2.2 Share your story**

Mr. Royal constructed the *share your story* literacy practice in an effort to help students understand their own lives in relation to the lives of others. Writing and sharing went hand in hand:

I mean I would be happy if at the end of the unit--forget voice, forget sensory details--they were just--they use it as a template to maybe better understand themselves or the lives of other people. If they're sharing it with their peer, their story, or they're sharing it with the group. Yeah, I think that's just the most important thing. (interview, August 19, 2014)

Mr. Royal's stated goal of having students "better understand themselves or the lives of other people" places the purpose for this writing practice within the growing in social and emotional maturity economy. Students were to develop mature perspectives on the world by sharing their stories and understanding their lives in relation to the lives their peers revealed in their stories.

Perhaps because this writing practice was constructed primarily in the memoir-writing unit, which was the only unit in Mr. Royal's curriculum that he had designed before he had to align with the Common Core State Standards, the goals he communicated for the *share your story* writing practice were almost exclusively those of writing strong narratives that told important stories from students' lives. Mr. Royal now had his students applying the elements of a writer's craft that he wanted them to learn by reading as writers (sensory details, tone, voice, setting, and earned themes). As examined in the previous section, Mr. Royal chose some of the focuses for students based on his understanding of the standards, but they were again communicated to students as the elements that would help them construct their best narratives. Mr. Royal called the memoir unit the one of which he was the most proud because he saw the benefits of focusing his student-writers' efforts:

Yeah, I was most proud of the memoir unit, the focusing on specific things like voice. I think last year I would give them a range of things of things maybe to focus on, we all did sensory details, but maybe one of your strengths or weaknesses in writing is this and you



want to work on that. Whereas this year, I wanted to work together on three or four specific things--voice and sensory details and things like that as a group. (interview, August 19, 2014)

His decision to focus student writing in specific ways stemmed from a desire to build a writing community where students were working with the same practices toward a common goal.

Mr. Royal already knew that students have responded positively to the memoir task in the past. He referenced it as a writing assignment that former students frequently used to maintain a connection to him in later years:

I have kids come back and say, “Do you remember what I wrote for?”--we did write a personal literacy narrative one time, but kids--I've done memoir every year, and they'll say, “Do you remember what I wrote for my memoir? I still remember what I wrote a couple years ago.” So I do hear things like that every once in a while, but it's also the kids that come back and see me--the ones that liked me so. (laughs) (interview, November 7, 2013)

Mr. Royal knew that his instruction in the *share your story* writing practice resonated with students, and he wanted to reinforce those personal responses. These interview excerpts also revealed one way in which he benefitted from sponsoring writing practices that focused students' efforts toward the growing in social and emotional maturity economy. Students came to him remembering what they had written, indicating that it still mattered to them. Brandt's interview script asked her participants to share their memories of the writing they did in schools (2009, p. 194) and influential or significant events from learning to write (2009, p. 195). Mr. Royal could enjoy the sponsor's benefit of “association” (p. 27) by being part of the stories his students told friends and family about their best experiences with writing.

To achieve the position of a writer who can communicate his or her life in meaningful ways to readers, I saw Mr. Royal establish terms of access that included engaging in a rigorous writing process predicated on their achievement in mastering the *reading with a writer's sensibility* practice in order to incorporate sensory details, voice, place, and “earned” themes. First, though, they needed to select topics like real writers, in Mr. Royal’s construction, namely those that communicate universal themes:

1. Mr. Royal: Oh something I said earlier about the proposals--OK tomorrow when you hand in your proposals {6 second pause while Mr. Royal picks up a paper that had fallen off of a student's desk and returns it to her} a lot of you are going to want to write about sports events, and that's fine, but let me tell you why it's difficult, or that's the harder path to write about a sporting event. Let's say you want to write about the time you hit a walkoff homerun in baseball or softball, and you won the game, and it was a great great story, and the climax of the story is it's bottom of the ninth, bases loaded, down by three, uh the count's three and two, you take a deep breath, you step into the batter's box, and you feel what?
2. Trent: Nervous.
3. Mr. Royal: Nervous. What else?
4. James: Scared.
5. Mr. Royal: Scared.
6. Fem Stud. 1: Anxious.
7. Mr. Royal: Anxious. Apprehensive.
8. Male Stud.: Excited.

9. Mr. Royal: Excited.
10. Fem Stud 2: Pressure.
11. Mr. Royal: Ok pressure. You have to do a really great vivid job of getting those feelings across to your reader because it's very unlikely that anyone in this room has been in that situation. How many people have been in that situation in softball or baseball, bottom of the ninth, bottom of the sixth, the last inning, you're down by whatever, you've got a few people on base, and you need to hit them home?
12. Students: {multiple students raising their hands}
12. Mr. Royal: 1 2 3 4 5 in this half 6. That's a lot. The other classes had one or zero. That's a really unique feeling to be in that position. I've never been in that position. Four or five of us have. It's much easier to kind of convey, express universal feelings like loss. It's much easier to connect to a story where someone's dog passed away, someone's grandmother passed away. Why is it more--why is it easier to connect those--to those types of stories?
14. James: 'Cause like it's like not as many people have experienced that. More people have experienced like losses.
15. Mr. Royal: Heather.
16. Heather: [More] people know what it's like to feel sad like that.
17. Mr. Royal: Um it doesn't have to be your dog or your grandma or your aunt or your uncle, but most of us--human beings of thirteen and fourteen—have experienced some sort of loss in this room. It might be easier--I'm not saying--it doesn't have to be tragic like loss. It could be a happy feeling

too, something good happened to you, but it's much easier to express those universal feelings than it is those unique feelings that come from sports where you're in a unique position that not many people have been in.

Does that make sense? Am I explaining that well? You sure? I ran out of coffee in third period today. OK so my point is if you want to write about a sporting event that's fine, but just know I think you're taking the harder path.

I interpreted Mr. Royal's construction of "easier" and "harder" as not necessarily referring to the level of mental difficulty required for students to write their narratives. A memoir about hitting a "walkoff homerun" could conceivably lend itself very well to vivid images and sensory details and therefore meet many of the terms of access of the *share your story* literacy practice. Instead, I believe Mr. Royal was referring to the ease with which the students would be able to connect their stories as writers to an audience. Writers express "universal" themes (turns 12 and 17) in narratives that reveal and reflect in interesting ways on experiences common to a broad audience.

The ideological freight of the *share your story* narrative was that writing is a public act that reveals the self, and the best writers are those that are not afraid to reveal challenging aspects of their histories. Students who did so earned praise from Mr. Royal, and he expressed disappointment regarding those that did not.

I was proud of Joel and [his twin brother]. You didn't see [his brother's], but I felt like they both picked a story that was meaningful to them, they both picked really critical moments in their life. Joel, about when he changed schools and even him being able to recognize that the change was positive in his life. He was in a school that was not so good, and his sister wanted a better life for them and moved them to Troy. So it has

nothing to do with writing instruction but yeah. As a writer, like I said I just was proud of him that he had chosen something that he was proud of to write about, something that meant something to him, something that--his sister emailed me about both of their essays--something that she was proud of too. They're both hard workers though I don't know if everything always sinks in with them, but in terms of effort they're one of the harder working pairs in the whole school and they come to homework club so.

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Hazel's a tough one. I think the Hazel I saw at the beginning of the year was so uncomfortable with writing, even if it was just a stupid silly writing prompt, it was kind of like, "I I don't get this. I don't want to write down what I think about this." Where towards the end of the year, if I were to throw up the same writing prompt, she would just get it and start kind of writing. I think she was a little bit more comfortable I think with her writerly self. She also chose a really I think difficult thing to write about too for her memoir--her mom and how she'd take care of her brother and stuff like that. And she was eager to write about that. She really wanted to.

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Well I can start with Blake's weaknesses. I guess his memoir is--I think I wrote on there is like, "Terribly disappointed" in his memoir. I just was "kind of disappointed in the quality of this essay." I don't think his, and he--oh he did pick a serious topic too [the death of a cousin through a heroin overdose]. Yeah, I don't think he was intentionally doing this on purpose, but I can't remember--I think he was kind of trying to put a bit of comic relief in there maybe. There was just some jokes, or he didn't really reflect on the event. It was just kind of like, "This happened," and I can't remember but I thought the

takeaway for me was Blake had wrote this terrible thing happened, and “I'm detached from it,” like, “I want nothing to do with it,” and I just remember--his use of sensory details and voice and things like that, it just wasn't a good quality essay, and I think he did put work into it and time into it. (interview, August 19, 2014)

In praising Joel and Hazel, Mr. Royal's focus was their commitment to writing difficult topics. They accepted that their best stories would be those that were personally challenging but that they would be supported by Mr. Royal, and potentially other students, if they did so. Based on his topic, Blake should have earned similar praise, however, Mr. Royal censured Blake because he did not seem committed to carrying the seriousness of his topic through all of the necessary writing elements—especially in maintaining a tone that matched the topic. The ideological freight for *share your story* was a willingness to reveal that which was personal and possibly painful to a wider audience—but through other aspects of sponsorship to have the skill as a writer to do it well as a way to ease the challenge.

Students did not need to write about such difficult topics for Mr. Royal to consider them successful. For instance, he praised Olivia's memoir about running a five-kilometer race for the first time because she set the place well, included vivid sensory details, and drew a theme about learning to appreciate her city out of a story about running. She still seemed to accept the ideological freight of the practice in how she interpreted her writing as having personal meaning while meeting the discrete terms of access to the practice because of how she applied the elements of writer's craft that Mr. Royal had taught for narrative writing. Mr. Royal made no reference, however, to Joel and Hazel's abilities to apply those same elements in their writing. In fact, he characterized both as weaker writers than most of their peers in areas like basic sentence structure.

Where Joel, Hazel, and Olivia succeeded in different ways and Blake failed, then, seems to be in the social and emotional maturity economy. They demonstrated a willingness to approach challenging narratives and carry the appropriate tone throughout. Even when Olivia's story did not carry the same potential emotional weight as Blake's, she developed a consistency of tone that Blake lacked, which Mr. Royal may have interpreted as a commitment to the story even if another plausible explanation was a difference in writing skill. The emotional strength Mr. Royal attributed to those who took on demanding subjects, and Joel and Hazel specifically, indicated that they could continue to face challenges that future academic and life situations would present.

#### **4.2.3 Use writing to challenge your thinking and mature**

Mr. Royal sponsored the *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* writing practice across multiple units of instruction. This writing practice required that students use writing to practice tentative positions, sometimes on subjects that they could then extend in class discussion or formal writing. The most typical means by which students engaged with this literacy practice was the informal writing that accompanied novel studies. Some also used the research unit to investigate topics that would challenge them to make sense and communicate an understanding of difficult subjects. This writing practice helped convey one of Mr. Royal's goals for writing in his class:

I guess that it's a tool for empowerment um agency um that reading and writing and language and voice help us enact different identities and different roles. I try to always hammer home that writing is a medium for thought, that writing is a way to get our

unorganized and jumbled thoughts down on paper so we can sort them out. (interview, November 7, 2013)

In order to succeed in this practice, students needed to use writing to express opinions but also be prepared to challenge those opinions.

In novel study units, Mr. Royal used informal writing assignments to ask students to consider aspects of the texts in new ways or examine their beliefs about the world. During the *To Kill a Mockingbird* unit, Mr. Royal distributed colored pencils and asked students to draw a scientist as a way of introducing a discussion about gender stereotypes and how stereotypes affect the character of Scout (see Figure 4.3). As students began to share their drawings, Mr. Royal called on those whose drawings did not look like others. After discussing why students drew 21 male scientists and four female scientists and how certain professions become gendered, students wrote to the prompt, “What gender stereotypes do readers associate with girls? How does society reinforce these stereotypes?”

After students had the opportunity to respond, they used points from their writing in the ensuing discussion on differing societal expectations for males and females and how those expectations are communicated:

1. Mr. Royal: OK so according to things like society, tradition, the media, what's a girl supposed to look like?
2. Everett: I actually thought of--you know that show “The Honeymooners” that was on a long long time ago?
3. Mr. Royal: I'm not familiar with it, but I've heard of it.





**Figure 4.2.** Examples of Students' Scientist Drawings

4. Everett: I thought I thought that one was a really good example because like the husband--I don't know his name--he came home, his wife had a dress on, but she also had on an apron like because like she's in the kitchen all day cooking dinner.

Everett's connection to an older television show was not something that Mr. Royal expected, but it demonstrated how Everett was using the day's lesson and writing to draw connections to other experiences with gender stereotyping. Mr. Royal then collected more evidence from students of expectations for girls and how gender stereotyping occurs:

10. Grace: Had to act like very mature and like proper back then [...]

11. Mr. Royal: Mmhmm I think there are things that boys get away with that girls can't get away with necessarily or held to a higher standard, whether that's fair or not. Um Ella.
12. Ella: [...]
13. Mr. Royal: K she said they're supposed to be nurturing and they're supposed to be motherly. Um Olivia.
14. Olivia: Well they shouldn't get in fights, like have you heard of that expression like, "boys will be boys," and there's no such thing as "girls will be girls."
15. Mr. Royal: That's an interesting point. Again by making an allowance for boys, "Well boys will be boys," but there is no expression "girls will be girls," 'cause they're not supposed to do those things. That's a good point Olivia. I like that.

Olivia connected a common saying to a novel expression to demonstrate her interpretation of the topic (turn 14). Mr. Royal reacted strongly to her efforts (turn 15), indicating that she had challenged the class's construction of traditional thinking. Olivia had recorded the phrase "boys will be boys" on her writing assignment that day. However, she did not make the connection to society having no similar phrase like "girls will be girls" until combining her writing with the ongoing conversation. Olivia's writing prepared her to think, or it was a medium for thought and a way to organize ideas in Mr. Royal's way of speaking, in ways that would help her and her classmates interrogate the gendered stereotypes that had influenced them.

In the research unit, Mr. Royal warned students that certain topics would challenge their sensibilities. As they met in the school library, he and the librarian addressed the class:

Mr. Royal cautioned the class that certain topics, particularly the Scottsboro Boys and Emmett Till, are graphic and require maturity. (I know Andrea is signed up to research Emmett Till.) The librarian mentions how some of this can be “unsettling,” and that there’s a fair amount of heavy material. (observation, April 15, 2014)

Students willing to research these topics had the opportunity to earn currency in the social and emotional maturity economy that was so important to the *share your story* literacy practice. They could use the space of an academic research paper to work through and experiment with their personal reactions to painful or shameful aspects of the society they had inherited. In similar situations, such as reading passages in *To Kill a Mockingbird* that dealt with racism and racial slurs, Mr. Royal positioned their reading and writing on such topics as an indication of readiness for the adult themes that can arise in high school and older academic settings. Like the *share your story* writing practice, the *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* writing practice prepared students to earn currency in the growing in social and emotional maturity economy. Where I saw the social and emotional maturity required of *share your story* reflecting primarily toward personal and social ends for students, *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* demonstrated that currency in the same economy could prepare students for future academic challenges they would face with writing.

#### **4.2.4 Argumentative writing is a formula**

The *argumentative writing is a formula* and the *state assessment writing is a formula* writing practice examined in the next section coexisted in the span of about three weeks. Mr. Royal intentionally connected these two practices in order to prepare students for the state assessment while they wrote an argumentative essay in response to *The Alchemist*. His pedagogical reasons

were accompanied by similarities in how he talked about how and why to engage in the practices. Mr. Royal was also more likely to position the class as students in these practices, rather than as writers.

In Mr. Royal's classroom, argumentative writing was used to demonstrate understanding of reading, specifically the philosophical novel *The Alchemist*. Students gained access to this practice by using structural elements of arguments. According to Newell, VanDerHeide, and Wynhoff Olsen a structural argumentative epistemology is one in which students learn to identify and apply "argument elements" to create essays that develop a recognizable structure (2014, p. 97). For Mr. Royal, two structural terms of access were key. The first was the analytical thesis, which he defined as a thesis that makes an argument (as opposed to a thesis that is informational and sets up topics that will be described). Student theses needed to contain a subordinating conjunction as well to show a relationship between the ideas of the argument. The second was an argument writing "formula" consisting of claims, evidence, and reasoning. The Mr. Royal first taught students how he wanted them to write thesis statements:

1. Mr. Royal: Subordinate conjunctions. {Mr. Royal at blackboard pointing at words on it} These are words like--I want you to write every one of these down because you will need to use them in your paper: in order, because, since, so that, although, therefore, unless, until, as, as if, which, even though.
2. {pause of over 20 seconds as students write words from the board}
3. Mr. Royal: Subordinate conjunctions are words like *in order, because, since, so that, although, therefore*. What's a subordinate conjunction do? How's it function in a sentence? [2] Coordinate conjunctions connect words or

phrases. What do subordinate conjunctions do? [3] They do more than just connect. [5] Everett.

4. Everett: They relate two topics.
5. Mr. Royal: They show a relationship between two phrases. That's key. They show a relationship between words or phrases in a sentence.
6. {pause of over 20 seconds as students write definition from the board and Mr. Royal writes an example sentence}
7. Mr. Royal: So for example, "I went to the grocery store so that I could make dinner." What's the conjunction in that sentence? Sunny.
8. Sunny: So that.
9. Mr. Royal: What two phrases is it connecting? Hazel.
10. Hazel: I went to the grocery store
11. Mr. Royal: That's one.
12. Hazel: So that I could make dinner
13. Mr. Royal: That's two. What's the relationship between these two phrases in the sentence? How does one depend on the other one? Lily.
14. Lily: In order to [make dinner] you have to get food
15. Mr. Royal: OK so in order for phrase two to even happen, in order to make that dinner, it's dependent on phrase one. You have to go to the grocery store first in order to get the ingredients.

Mr. Royal had introduced subordinate conjunctions in an essay early in the school year, but he had not discussed their place in his construction of thesis statements before. On this day of whole class instruction, Mr. Royal coached students in naming and recognizing relationships

created by subordinate conjunctions so that the structure of their thesis statements was in place for the claims he wanted them to make.

Near the end of the period, Mr. Royal introduced students to a second requirement for thesis statements:

1. Mr. Royal: (reading) “Is the thesis statement analytical? The thesis statement should do more than announce the topic of your essay. It should reveal what position you will take and how you plan to address the subject at issue.”  
So I wrote, “Avoid making pro/con judgments that oversimplify issues.”  
So my origin--this is my thesis statement. It's pretty weak. “We must save the planet.” Why is that a weak thesis statement? “We must”—  
that's my thesis statement. “We must save the planet.” It's going to come at the end of my introduction. Eric.
2. Eric: [...]
3. Mr. Royal: It doesn't explain why we must do what?
4. Eric: [save the planet]
5. Mr. Royal: Save the planet. Hazel.
6. Hazel: [...] conjunction.
7. Mr. Royal: It doesn't have a subordinate conjunction. Robert.
8. Robert: [...]
9. Mr. Royal: OK James.
10. James: It's just like a really [...]
11. Mr. Royal: I don't know how many people would argue with that. Is that an arguable position? Who would argue that you don't want to save the planet?

Maybe someone [like] Eric, but for the most part: it doesn't have a subordinate conjunction, it's not analytical, it doesn't say why we should do anything. So on the blackboard I wrote, "We must save the planet because" let's just brainstorm a list of reasons why.

Mr. Royal wanted thesis statements that established positions for argument. The first clause established the position (We must save the planet), the subordinate conjunction introduced a related second clause (because), and the second clause stated the unifying argument (we need to pass it on to future generations).

Mr. Royal's approach to thesis statements contrasts with the three-part thesis template taught by many ELA educators which sets up the five-paragraph essay that has dominated secondary writing for over a quarter of a century now (Nunnally, 1991 in Wesley, 2000). I asked Mr. Royal about that difference in our post-research interview:

The essays that I saw from seventh grade that do that, that list A B and C. I mean they just weren't strong enough, they weren't forceful enough, they weren't arguing anything. It was just kind of list--it was a list, that's all it was. So I mean I've been working with the seventh grade teachers to kind of take a shift from just listing three things, to like, "How can we start getting the kids to at least think about creating a claim, or a strong and forceful claim that the kids can elaborate on in the paper," so. And it's tough to say, "Oh:: the list is bad," maybe you can make a list and you are arguing something. It's just it becomes so formulaic for the kids. It's like a thesis statement's one of the hardest things to write in the paper, and I think what I was thinking in seventh grade--and the kids are coming to my eighth grade class, I was like, "Thesis statements. These are easy. It's a formula A B and C. You just plug in your three talking points and that's it," and I

don't know, that's not how I would have written a thesis statement or approached them, so. (interview, August 19, 2014)

Mr. Royal's preference for analytical thesis statements was a reflection of his understanding of student needs and his own experiences. Drawing on his experiences as a student-writer, a writing major, and a teacher to whom students had returned to discuss their writing after leaving his class, Mr. Royal positioned students as needing to emphasize claims over formulas in how they wrote thesis statements.

Given the list-like thesis statement's easy transference to the five-paragraph essay model so prevalent in middle and secondary education, and valued on many standardized tests, Mr. Royal's sponsorship of analytical thesis statements could have led to multiple outcomes for students. First, students may decide not to appropriate analytical thesis statements if his method differs from all or most of the instruction his students encounter elsewhere in middle or secondary education. However, given that most post-secondary writing expands beyond the constraints of the list-like thesis template, the students that do appropriate the kind of thesis statements Mr. Royal sponsored may have found themselves more prepared for the post-secondary knowledge economy.

While he resisted formulas in thesis statements, he embraced the concept for body paragraphs. The second structural element of argument that functioned as a term of access to the practice for students was Mr. Royal's "formula" for writing body paragraphs: claim, evidence, reason, and counterargument. The formula was pervasive in Mr. Royal's instruction as he had students memorize and apply a version of Toulmin's (1958) model in each of their body paragraphs:



1. Mr. Royal: Alright. (reading) “What is argument writing? Last year you wrote a persuasive essay. In persuasive writing you often appeal to emotions and use style to persuade your readers. Your single purpose is to be convincing. In argument writing”--or excuse me—“Argument writing on the other hand mainly involves using claims, evidence, reasons or warrants, and counterarguments. It's the kind of writing you need to know for success in college and in life.” Have we heard these terms before? Claims, evidence, reasons and warrants, and counterarguments? Where have we heard or used those terms before? Claims, evidence, and reasons.  
Lily.
2. Lily: Like in courts
3. Mr. Royal: Oh so outside school. OK um good, a lot of times those terms are used like in police dramas or detective dramas in school--or excuse me—on television. Blake.
4. Blake: In science class we learned counterargument.
5. Mr. Royal: K good. You learned counterargument. Did you use claims, evidence, and reasons last year?
6. Some Stud.: No
7. Fem. Stud.1: Yeah remember [...]
8. Fem. Stud.2: I don't remember
9. Fem. Stud.3: Yeah the bullying [...] reasons why we shouldn't [...] and evidence that [it's bad]
10. Mr. Royal: OK so you've heard it before.

Although Mr. Royal thought students would respond with academic uses of the formula, Lily had her favorite topic in mind: the work of lawyers. Mr. Royal acknowledged her perspective and eventually encouraged the rest of the class to connect the formula to other areas of life through a discussion of advertisements, but he intended to use the introduction to argumentative writing to prepare students to see the formula as preparing them for future academic economies.

Though Mr. Royal never referenced it as such, the formula he asked students to follow placed them within the “college and career readiness” economy of the Common Core State Standards where student-writers “Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence” (W.8.1), “Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims” (W.8.1a), and “Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence” (W.8.1b). Mr. Royal’s sponsorship practices in the *argumentative writing is a formula* literacy practice exemplify how abstract sponsors produce material effects in local contexts of instruction.

We can see the potential effects of the CCSS by looking at the writing standards from the National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association. Those standards do not construct argument writing as a separate practice from other kinds of writing like informational writing. Standard five says, “Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.” Standard six says, “Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.” Neither standard specifies how students should construct arguments as the CCSS do. As a result, teachers would have more leeway to teach that genre and other genres in ways they felt were

most appropriate. Some teachers may find that standards paradigm freeing, while others may find it too vague to be useful. As abstract sponsors, then, standards communicate to teachers the means by which they should construct writing practices for students. They also help establish the academic economies supported by student writing. One of the reasons to define expectations for writing as explicitly as the CCSS do would be to set up a system by which all students are judged for their contributions to the same academic economy. Individual teachers become local administrators of that universal academic economy, but in contexts like Mr. Royal's the standards could remain relatively abstracted because his school had granted him the authority to make curricular decisions. Thus, for argument writing, Mr. Royal was able to emphasize both academic and non-academic literacy economies that did not directly connect to those sponsored by the CCSS and other state standards. However, the CCSS standards became much more concrete sponsors of instruction and learning when Mr. Royal prepared his students for the state assessments.

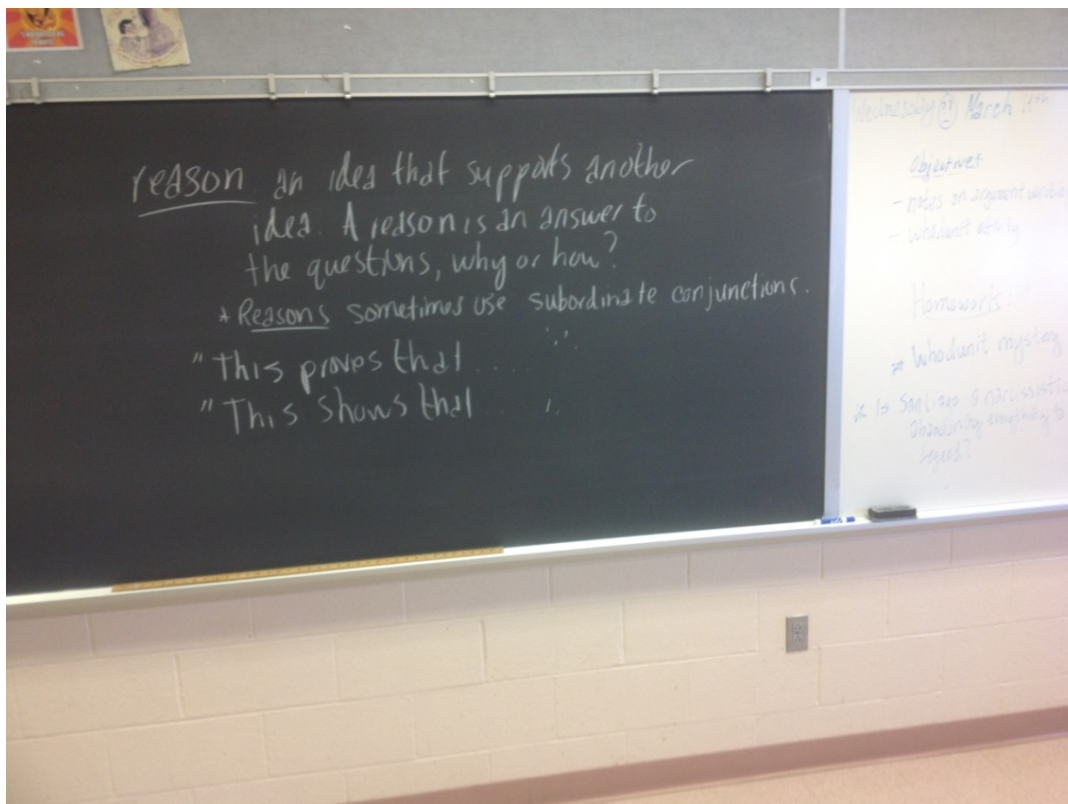
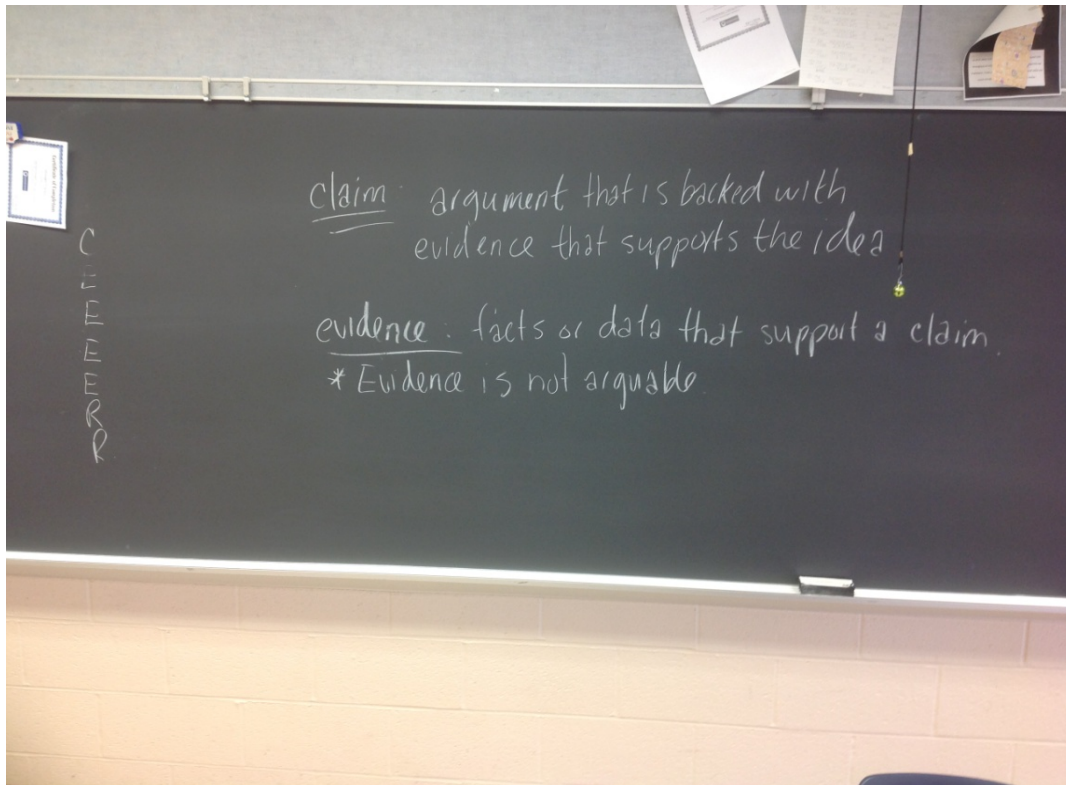
#### **4.2.5 State assessment writing is a formula**

The *state assessment writing is a formula* practice stands out as the one in which Mr. Royal was least likely to position the class as writers who should have goals beyond the immediate task (standardized testing). Instead, they were students made to apply a specific set of skills that had few applications outside of timed writing on tests, despite many similarities between the terms of access to *argumentative writing is a formula* and *state assessment writing is a formula*. Mr. Royal did not expect students to find meaning from this kind of writing and acknowledged he would also rather not talk about the tests.

As with argumentative writing, the terms of access to state assessment writing were analytical thesis statements and, most especially, the “formula” of claim, evidence, and reasoning. Mr. Royal’s connection of these terms of access from *argumentative writing is a formula* to *state assessment writing is a formula* followed immediately from this formula’s first introduction. That day, Mr. Royal had written the definitions of the three elements of his formula for argumentative and state assessment writing on the blackboard as well as a template for structuring a paragraph with one claim, several pieces of evidence, and a reasoning statement (see Figure 4.4). He guided students through a discussion of his example paragraph that applied the formula faithfully and then stated his intentions for the students’ writing:

1. Mr. Royal: When we go to write our body paragraphs we're sticking to this formula.  
{ Walks to blackboard; puts hand over the formula. } Claims to introduce our ideas, evidence that supports our ideas, and then lines of reasoning to prove or show what we mean. [4] This is what we will do on the [state assessment] as well. This is what they look for. Can you write a claim in your opening lines of each paragraph? Can you provide evidence that's relevant and supports that claim? Can you analyze your claim and all your evidence?

At no time on this day did Mr. Royal feel he needed to clarify who “they” were. As eighth graders, his students would have taken state standardized tests every year since the third grade and seemed used to working on tasks that served to prepare them to answer to a state assessment economy. The state assessment economy had few tangible effects on the students themselves, because their efforts were turned into a score that an unknown official of the state would look at but which had no bearing on their success in Mr. Royal’s course itself or their promotion to the



**Figure 4.3.** The Argument and State Assessment Writing Formula

next grade. The state assessment economy had more consequential effects on Mr. Royal and his school as student scores became publicly available and stood as evidence of his and the school's quality. On this day, Mr. Royal did not broach the subject of who required this work of students and what student performance meant for him and others. Instead, he tried to emphasize the idea that if students properly memorized and applied the formula, they would meet the expectations of their teacher and, by extension, "they."

Rather than using writing to challenge themselves as they did with other literacy practices, particularly *share your story* and *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature*, Mr. Royal directed students to select topics that were easy to write. Personal and academic growth were not the goals of this practice. He positioned students in a storyline of writing things they already know. On the day before students took the state writing assessment, about three weeks after the above excerpt from the initial introduction of the formula, he coached students on the writing process he wanted them to follow for the test. Mr. Royal directed students to allot 20 minutes to prewriting—2-3 minutes for brainstorming topics and the rest for creating a pre-writing map—35 minutes for drafting, and about five for proofreading. The class then did a group practice to a prompt asking them about one thing they would change in their community:

1. Mr. Royal: OK let's just brainstorm very quickly two to three minutes. What do we maybe want to write our essay about? One thing we would change about our town. {Grace and Blake raise their hands.} I'd rather hear bad ideas than no ideas. Grace.
2. Grace: [...] [water]
3. Mr. Royal: OK {Writing on the blackboard.} Pollution, litter. Write down what I'm doing. I want you to know what it's like to write for twenty-five minutes, a

- prewriting map. OK pollution, litter maybe. We could talk about green spaces. What else? That's one possible idea.
4. Heather: Building more parks.
5. Mr. Royal: {Writes Heather's suggestion on the blackboard.} Parks. James.
6. James: You could like take away standardized tests.
7. Mr. Royal: {Writes James's suggestion on the blackboard.} OK. That is possible.  
Yes. What else? Ella and then Blake.
8. Ella: More sidewalks.
9. Mr. Royal: {Writes Ella's suggestion on the blackboard.} Blake.
10. Blake: Cleaner streets.
11. Mr. Royal: I'm going to put that with pollution. OK? {Writes Blake's suggestion on the blackboard.} What else? My advice is to always write what you know. What do we know the most about? [3] Olivia.
12. Olivia: School. Education.
13. Mr. Royal: {Writes Olivia's suggestions on the blackboard.} School. We can talk about the things we want to change in school. Maybe we want to talk about funding for the school. What else? James, Sunny.
14. James: We could have a YMCA [...]
15. Mr. Royal: {Writes James's suggestion on the blackboard.} I'm gonna put like community spaces. Sunny.
16. Sunny: Sports facilities.
17. Mr. Royal: {Writes Sunny's suggestion on the blackboard.} OK. That's a good list.  
OK so which one do we want to write our paper about? Keep in mind uh

we have to write three body paragraphs at least on this topic. Are we going to be able to write three body paragraphs on sidewalks?

18. Blake: No.

19. Mr. Royal: Probably not. It's OK. I wanted all ideas. That's OK. Probably not going to write about that though. Someone said potholes first period. I probably could write an arg--a paper, three paragraphs, about potholes, but are you going to be able to do that tomorrow? Probably not. OK. What's the thing that we know the most about? You need to write what you know. What's the thing that we can really explore and expand on? {Several students raise their hands.} Amy.

20. Amy: School.

21. Mr. Royal: I'm thinking school 'cause that's what we know. That's what we're most educated on. We're here every day. We know how school works. Uh you need to know your audience when you write your essay. My advice would be to--even though I agree with you, James--not write about why you should get rid of standardized testing. Why do you think you should not write about that?

22. James: Because [...]

23. Mr. Royal: Who is your audience? {Three students raise their hands.} I agree with you, James, that we should [get rid of them] for the most part but uh Heather.

24. Heather: People that write standardized testing.



25. Mr. Royal: It's the Department of Education. They probably don't want to hear your essay about why you should get rid of [state] testing. Do you think they're interested in reading an essay about the one thing you'd change is that there should be a Chipotle next to school. Do you think that makes a good academic essay? Where you can show off all your skills? Writing skills? Probably not. That you should build--that we should build an amusement park in the school. Do you think that makes a good academic essay? Know your audience. It's the Department of Education. These are all pretty good, except for getting rid of standardized testing for the reason I just said, but you're not going to write about Chipotle, you're not going to write about video games, and you're not going to write about an amusement park. Write about something academic. School's fine. So let's write a thesis statement quickly.

In turns 11 and 19, Mr. Royal directed students to write what they know, a topic about which they can quickly produce three or more body paragraphs in a timed setting. Mr. Royal's directive served a practical purpose, as students had to produce substantial essays independently and in a limited amount of time, but it marked a shift in his normal discourse. In the *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* and *share your story* practices in particular, he asked the class to explore ideas, write about important topics, and consider multiple perspectives. The shift in discourse also marked a different ideology for this practice: writing what one already knows satisfies the wishes of educational brokers who measure students by test scores, whereas writing to challenge thinking and learn more about the world is the work of true writers.

The figure of the abstract sponsors of state assessment writing received more attention on this day than when “they” were left unexplored in an earlier class. In the above transcript, Mr. Royal entertained James’s topic suggestion (turn 6) but ultimately guided the class to rejecting it (turns 23 & 25). The reason for the rejection created an audience for the students’ writing: the Department of Education. The Department of Education benefits from the students’ productions in the state assessment economy through the generation of data used to evaluate schools and teachers. Thus, students “showing off” their writing skills (turn 25) and taking the assessments seriously benefits the Department of Education as the sponsor of the tests. More than that, Mr. Royal instructed students to avoid non-academic topics that would demonstrate a lack of maturity or desire to take the state assessments seriously. Perhaps Mr. Royal’s students could have crafted three strong and well-reasoned body paragraphs that showed off their writing abilities while at the same time opposing the restrictions and impositions of the abstract sponsors operating through their teacher (as James suggested in turn 6). However, Mr. Royal advised students to write responses that protected his and their status in the testing economy. While he entertained students’ questions about the authority of this abstract sponsor, he used his authority as the local sponsor to reinforce the assessment writing practice that served the Department of Education’s economy.

Mr. Royal acknowledged his antipathy toward the *state assessment is a formula* practice in several ways, but he always eventually reinforced its importance. Students entered the room one day to find the following “objective” on the white board: [State assessment] stuff/junk. At the conclusion of the same day as the above excerpt, Mr. Royal gave students examples of past prompts:

1. Mr. Royal: Here are prompts that the state has released that have been out there before. "Should boys and girls have gym together?" [...] "Write about a person who has made a difference in the community." Some of these are ridiculous. {Jenna and Ella, nearest to the camera, exchange a smirk.} "How have your likes and dislikes changed over time?"

Mr. Royal did not explain why he found some prompts “ridiculous.” Perhaps he felt that they did not fit the kind of writing he wanted from his students and for which he had been preparing them—writing he knew they could do well. “How have your likes and dislikes changed over time?” is not a prompt that suggests an argument. His comments served as another example for students of the divide between writing that Mr. Royal felt was worthwhile, which would never force students to write about ridiculous and inconsequential topics, and the writing the “state” felt was important for assessment.

Moments later, however, Mr. Royal reinforced the central message of the state assessment economy: students’ performance on the assessment was consequential to their well-being as students despite scores not affecting grades or promotion. After an appeal seemingly targeted at building solidarity, he appealed to their desire for personal success:

1. Mr. Royal: Relax, trust yourself, we've been doing this for three weeks. How many people are burned out from last week with [state assessments]? You're sick of it? {All visible students raise their hands.} I urge you to still give it your best shot tomorrow. This is your score for the next three years. You don't take this again until your junior year. I'm not saying that to scare you. I'm saying that--please take it seriously tomorrow for yourself.

You're not going to take this again in ninth and tenth grade. Whatever you get tomorrow will be your score until you're a junior.

Despite his stated intention not to “scare” the students, Mr. Royal reinforced the value of the state assessment’s claim to represent student learning through “scores.” Depending on the policies of the individual district, those scores can provide or limit access to certain academic tracks or remove opportunities for elective courses if students are instead placed in remediation classes to make sure the school looks better by the time students take the eleventh grade standardized tests.

When he first introduced argumentative writing, Mr. Royal referenced it as being connected to academic writing economies associated with high school, college, and a general appeal to “life.” However, in his final interview with me, he also acknowledged the state assessment score economy as influencing his views of argument writing. What he did not tell students, when he made the statement about their scores following them for three years, is that their scores also followed him:

This year I changed up my initial approach to the argument writing unit. I had never done that activity I did before, where we looked at the crime scene and the kids had to use evidence to draw conclusions and then kind of make claims based off that. I had never done that before, and I don't know--I think we talked about this--I don't know how successful that was. I usually just went straight claim, evidence, reasoning--let's find it in writing, let's practice writing our own. And this time the approach was with this project, start with the evidence, kind of how a crime reporter does, this is all our evidence. What conclusions can we make based off that evidence? What kind of lines of reasoning can we come up with? And then what claims can we make overall about what might of

happened? So I approached it that way and I don't know--I don't have my [state assessment] results yet like how--not that that's the defining thing but- (interview, August 19, 2014)

In assessing the effectiveness of his changes to his instruction in argument writing, Mr. Royal did not first think about the quality of his students' argumentative essays about *The Alchemist*—as he would in his next turn after I probed him on them. He thought about how his students performed on the state assessments. Student test scores could reflect heavily on his competency in the eyes of administrators. Students were assessed each year they were in Troy Middle School, and so administrators could easily interpret the change in student scores from year to year as evidence of a teacher's ability. In the *state assessment is a formula* writing practice, Mr. Royal did not appear as the primary sponsor. Instead, he seemed to acknowledge others for whom he was the local representative—alternatively, “they” and the Department of Education—in a manner that did not appear with any other writing practice.

Mr. Royal's responses in his interview at the end of the year consistently demonstrated unease or tension with the connection between argument writing and state assessment writing.

Well I mean honestly a big goal is to prepare them for the [state assessments]. That's why I always put it right behind or right in front of the [state assessments] um cause that's the type of writing that [test] values um but it's also the type of writing they're going to be using for the rest of their life too, like in ninth grade, tenth grade, twelfth, and in college. (interview, August 19, 2014)

Again, his first instinct when thinking about argumentative writing was to reference the state assessments and the connection of the two in his instruction. Shortly afterward, I asked Mr.

Royal if he felt his curricular decisions were made from his own agency or as a result of outside influences, particularly state or school mandates:

Yeah I feel like for the large part they are mine. I just put argument writing right before [state assessments]. I--if there were no [state assessments] I hope that, and feel like, I would still be teaching the exact same way. (interview, August 19, 2014)

In this statement, Mr. Royal constructed the *state assessment is a formula* practice as mirroring many aspects of the *argumentative writing is a formula* practice because he felt that how he taught argumentative writing was how he prepared students for success in later academic writing. He may not have recognized all the ways in which the standardized tests influenced how he taught argument and talked about writing during instruction in those two practices. In the interview, he acknowledged that he was probably cynical with students when discussing tests, but despite the obvious pressure of the state assessments, Mr. Royal still wanted to turn his own and his students' attention toward more enduring uses for argumentation.

#### **4.2.6 Good writers revise everything**

The writing process for the *state assessment writing is a formula* practice did not include revision, which did not fit with Mr. Royal's preferred construction of the writing process. Mr. Royal loved revision (interview, November 7, 2013), and he wanted his students to see its necessity for quality writing, even if he did not think they would develop a similar love. Mr. Royal sponsored the *good writers revise everything* practice across every major writing unit in his curriculum.

Mr. Royal emphasized the centrality of terms of access and ideological freight to differing degrees in each writing practice, but *good writers revise everything* was the practice in

which he treated them as most depending on each other. Students entered the *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* practice mostly by aligning themselves with certain values. They entered the *state assessment writing is a formula* practice mostly by applying the correct skills. Mr. Royal used *good writers revise everything* to show students that they needed to apply both the correct skills and the correct ideologies to revise as effectively as real writers.

Each of Mr. Royal's major essays reflected different genres, yet the terms of access for revision were largely consistent. Students first revised body paragraphs, then introductions, and then conclusions. Specifically, students filled in charts where they added each sentence of a paragraph to a chart row. Students then filled in the chart's columns with elements of the sentence selected by Mr. Royal as specific focuses. These focuses included verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns for the memoir unit (see Figure 4.5). For argumentative writing, they identified each sentence as a claim, evidence, or reasoning; subordinating conjunctions; and present tense. For that assignment, they also determined if claims supported the thesis statement, whether all evidence was relevant, whether all quotations from the book were properly cited, and whether the paragraph included any vague words. When students charted the component parts of each sentence in the columns, they determined whether and how to revise the individual sentences on the lines below the chart.

To succeed in the revision practice, students had to commit substantial time and micro-level focus as a real writer would, with some allowances for their status as students. As students prepared to revise the body paragraphs of their memoirs, Mr. Royal had provided enough pages of the revision chart (see Figure 4.4) to do seven paragraphs. Lily asked a question that echoed typical student concerns:

Pg. 1

B1	First eight sentences—write them down	1—Verbs	2—Adjectives	3—Adverbs	4—Pronouns
1.	As I was sitting in my family room, my mom put up Christmas decorations.	was sitting, put up	family, Christmas		I, my, my
2.	She was telling me how her growth group from church decided to go feed the homeless shelter instead of doing a gift exchange.	was telling, doing, decided	growth group, homeless		She, me, her
3.	She was saying how I was allowed to go.	was saying, was			She, I
4.	I didn't really want to go so I asked her if I could bring a friend, and she said yes.	want, asked, bring, said			I, I, her, she
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					

1. As I sat in my family room, my mom put up stockings over the fireplace. 5. Speech tags:
2. She told me how her growth group from church decided to feed the homeless shelter instead of doing a gift exchange.
3. She said how I was allowed to go.
4. I didn't really want to go.
- I asked if I could bring a friend, and she said yes.

Figure 4.4. Sample Memoir Body Paragraph Revision

1. Lily: Do we just choose like paragraphs that we think need revised [[cause I—
2. Mr. Royal: [[How many people have more than seven body paragraphs?
3. {Five students visible to the camera have raised their hands.}
4. Mr. Royal: Yeah, typically if you're a writer you know you're going to revise every paragraph, tear apart sentence by sentence. This is really time consuming, and I know you have other things to do like math and science and you're going to have homework. So pick seven that you want to revise.

Mr. Royal balanced the value that good writers revise everything with the practicalities of working with adolescent students who have homework from multiple other classes. Mr. Royal's sponsorship did not fully position the class as if they were professional writers responsible for



revising every word of an entire draft, but because of his instruction, they knew how to do that work.

In a similar situation as students began revision for their research papers, Mr. Royal continued to blend the work of writers with the realities of students:

1. Mr. Royal: OK. Um do we understand how this works? Ignore section D for now, we'll do that tomorrow, but tonight maybe do a paragraph or two. Chart every single sentence. Ask yourself, does it connect to the topic sentence? If not, get rid of it. Are there any vague or unclear words? Where do I need to be more specific? And write every single verb and every single sentence out, and then look at them and ask, can I make them better? Can I make them more academic? You see at the bottom where it says "Rewrite Paragraph." You must re-write the entire paragraph. Is that clear? Some people weren't doing that in the last essay. It's the fourth time we've done this. You must rewrite the whole paragraph. I'm gonna check this on Monday for points. Do not say to me, "Oh there was nothing wrong with my paragraph. It was fine. I didn't need to rewrite it." There's something wrong with your paragraph. It's a rough draft. Everyone must rewrite your paragraph, adding new verbs, adding more specific details, taking things out. [3] Lastly, I know the work that I'm asking you to do. I'm aware. I know that this isn't easy, when you chart every single sentence, and you look at the verbs in every single sentence. You need to start working on this tonight. Go home tonight and do one paragraph. Tomorrow in tutorial, take fifteen to twenty minutes, chart out

another paragraph and rewrite it. When this becomes hard and problematic is when you wait until Sunday night at ten p.m. Yeah, Sunday night ten p.m. you're tired, this is going to be really hard to do, and your paper isn't going to be good because of it. Spread the work out. You have four nights to do this: Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. You have two tutorials to work on this: tomorrow and Monday. Take your time. Spread the work out. Make it manageable. It will be a nightmare for you Sunday night at ten p.m. if you try to do everything at the last minute. Questions about this?

In the first part of this substantial speech, Mr. Royal reviewed the revision skills students needed to apply to the research paper: thematically connecting all sentences in a paragraph to the topic sentence, identifying and changing words that confuse the reader or are ambiguous in their meaning, identifying and changing verbs and other words that are not academic enough, and taking the time to physically write out revised sentences. That last requirement was one students had not met in recent revision projects, so Mr. Royal resorted to a teacher's privilege of assigning a grade to that aspect of student work ("I'm gonna check this on Monday for points"). He also anticipated a typical student response that could be used to avoid such work ("Oh there was nothing wrong with my paragraph.") and turned his rejection of that argument into a reminder that good writers would find ways to improve. In other instruction, Mr. Royal did not exclude himself from the need to revise. He always wrote assignments with students and sometimes had students practice revision in class with his writing. When he shared his own writing, he remarked that his first draft samples were "just OK" (observation, April 11, 2014), inviting students to help him improve.

The last section of Mr. Royal's speech continued to blend the work that writers would do with expectations that would help students meet academic demands. He re-stated a refrain found in many days in which he was assigning extended reading or writing: do a little bit every day. Mr. Royal acknowledged that the work of revising in the manner he taught stretched his students. To meet his expectations, they needed to accept the ideological freight of the practice, namely setting aside enough time to revise every sentence.

Mr. Royal's sponsorship of *good writers revise everything* showed students one way to succeed in economies of high school and post-secondary academic expectations. In our end of the year interview, I told Mr. Royal that every focal student said they planned to revise in the future (see section 5.1.6):

Oh is that what they said? You know I think a lot of them will go into their first essay of next year knowing that this might be the best essay it can be if I go sentence by sentence, line by line, and revise. So I think they'll know it; I don't know if they'll do it if their teacher will make them do it. But I think it's like PTSD almost with these kids. I think when they have memories of revising in my class from eighth grade, it's something that will come up if they come visit me like, "Yeah revising was the hardest thing." So I think they do know what to do or at least what type of revision will make their paper as good as it can be, but [...] And to be honest with you, I don't--sometimes it's time, you know what I mean, if you put your essay off to the last minute you're not going to have time to do that. I'm not going to sit here and say I did that for every single one of my papers, because I didn't, but I think they know hopefully, hopefully, what good revision, solid revision looks like. Or how hard it is at least. (interview, August 19, 2014)

Mr. Royal communicated to students that their writing is the “best it can be” when they revise every line. He recognized that the revision practices he taught were very challenging for students and that they might choose to revise in different ways in the future. Despite the difficulty of revising his way, Mr. Royal always showed students that the practices he sponsored were attainable if they took enough time for them, and based on observations and work that I collected most students met those expectations. Alternatively, perhaps Mr. Royal used the power of his sponsorship to position students in a practice that they would struggle to implement without the direct support and commitment he brought. The value of *good writers revise everything* created a standard he did not expect students to achieve independently but that students would know they *should* attempt to produce their best work. Perhaps in endeavoring to show students what good or professional writers do to their drafts, he communicated that academic writing exists in an economy where their absolute best work is not achievable on their own.

In keeping with the ideological freight of the *good writers revise everything* practice, Mr. Royal described his assessment of student writing as valuing process over final product. In doing so, he again drew a distinction between professional and academic writing:

I think my written feedback on all their exams is--I mean I'm making this number up, but it's seventy percent positive like, “This is great,” like, “I really like this title,” like “I really like this line. This is well written. Whereas maybe thirty percent of it is negative. I think maybe I'm too easy as a teacher when it comes to grading their final papers. I mean if I was an editor at [a newspaper] everything might be negative and critical, but teaching eighth grade writing I'm not trying to step on anyone's dreams if they have this, like Olivia--small part of them that wants to be a writer, I'm gonna try and support them

in their writing, you know what I mean? It's eighth grade. It's not a prestigious newspaper we're working for. (interview, August 19, 2014)

Mr. Royal's reasoning for assessing writing as he did rested on the high value he placed on revision practices that he believed stemmed from his time as an undergraduate writing major and reflected a concern for those students who may see similar futures for themselves, such as Olivia. He introduced students to an expectation for their writing process but tempered those expectations when he needed to assess final products. To expand on his reference to a newspaper, which he may have used because he worked under professors who wrote for newspapers as an undergraduate, Mr. Royal seemed to set up different purposes for revision work in professional and middle school settings. When he imagined the work of editors at newspapers, revision served to get writers up to the level of the professional standard. The economy for that writing was to maintain the prestige of the newspaper (and make money). As an "editor" of eighth grade writers, Mr. Royal saw himself as supporting students in their projections of themselves as writers. I would argue the economy of high school academic writing is more flexible in its standards than what a newspaper would value, meaning Mr. Royal had more freedom to help his class pursue some purposes for writing that they determined for themselves. The revision process, then, could be more important than final product in the version of the academic writing economy that he supported:

Yeah, I would try to give more critical feedback during the rough draft period or during the conferencing period. It probably is just as simple as you see all the work they put into it, I don't think anyone's revising like I am in the middle school, so you can tell when a kid's actually sat down and really tried. Like to tear your paper apart sentence by sentence, I mean that's not easy. So to put all that time and work into it and then tell a kid

it's still not that great, I'm not going to do that. (laugh) So I guess I'm valuing the path it took to get there rather than the final product at times. (interview, August 19, 2014)

Mr. Royal showed students what real writers do when they revise, but he did not hold them to a professional writer's standard. He sponsored revision as a process by which students could see how their writing improved from one draft to another, whereas revision for professionals means the difference between publishing or not publishing, earning a living or not. The context of schooling in which Mr. Royal sponsored students into revision still meant that writing and revising led to assessments and grades, where he divided points on writing assignments evenly between process and final product. However, Mr. Royal wanted the focus of the challenging feedback students received to be on improvement, rather than evaluation.

## **5.0 STUDENTS' APPROPRIATION OF SPONSORED WRITING PRACTICES**

“I think there's two things, the rule and the fun thing. I think the rule would be the plagiarism thing, like if you do that it's serious, but I think he also wants you to take writing that isn't about facts and stuff and just put yourself in it and express yourself, like telling stories--he had us tell us of a moment that we liked of something. I did it of a marathon I was in--or a five-k or whatever it was.” – Olivia (interview, May 20, 2014)

Chapter 5 applies theories of sponsorship by looking at how those who are being sponsored appropriate, and translate sponsored writing practices. Individuals certainly take up practices in the manner intended by the sponsor and work within the intended economies and with the intended ideological beliefs, but Brandt also demonstrated that individuals appropriate literacies from sponsors by transporting them to unintended contexts and putting them to unintended uses while (1998; 2009). Individuals also take up aspects of sponsored practices while resisting, ignoring, or modifying others despite ostensibly remaining within the intended economies or beliefs.

According to sociocultural theories of identity, individuals' opportunities to appropriate practices depend on the positions they inhabit at sites of literacy learning (McVee, 2011). As students learned to write in Mr. Royal's class, they experienced the skills, ideologies, and economies associated with different writing practices. In their responses, they projected uses for writing that indicated ways in which their writing identities developed. Among other things, these projections demonstrated their engagement with sponsored writing practices and their

imagination of ways in which sponsored writing practices would continue to inform their personal, academic, and professional writing (Wenger, 1998).

In this chapter, I present students' responses to the sponsored writing practices primarily by drawing on analysis of interviews with five focal students (Blake, Hazel, Joel, Lily, and Olivia). I triangulated these analyses with further evidence from observations and classroom talk. I first discuss how students took up, or did not take up, the practices Mr. Royal emphasized. I then discuss the following four other writing practices that arose in connection to, but as additions to, his sponsorship. These writing practices represent students' translations of sponsorship into new ideas about how writers work:

- writers improve as writers,
- writers don't make writing hard,
- writers think writing through, and
- writers find uses for writing outside of school.

As Olivia's statement at the beginning of the chapter demonstrates, Mr. Royal's students' formed multiple perspectives and goals from his sponsored writing practices that included learning "rules," or skills, and values like personal expression.

## **5.1 STUDENTS' APPROPRIATION OF SPONSORED WRITING PRACTICES**

### **5.1.1 Read with a writer's sensibility**

Certain students in Mr. Royal's class—including focal students Blake, Olivia, and Lily—were frequent contributors to discussions of texts that supported the *read with a writer's sensibility*



literacy practice. They also spoke up frequently in whole class reviews of topics, when Mr. Royal verbally quizzed students on the ideas they had covered in previous classes, which reinforced the practices of narrative and memoir writing. In their interviews, however, the focal students did not reference specific ways in which reading as a writer helped them develop as writers.

Only Olivia expressed a view related to, or perhaps inspired by, the *read with a writer's sensibility* practice. She found that the subject matter of the class readings inspired her writing. She recognized a shift in tone from the kinds of school readings she was used to:

A lot of the stories and stuff he read stuff from nineteen something, like twenties or sixties, somewhere in there where it was supposed to be the scariest thing, but it was nothing compared to today, and it just seemed so serious compared to all the stuff that I've read that is from that time. It made me think that it's kinda really neat how they can make something so serious compared to what they did before when it wasn't really anything. (interview, May 20, 2014)

Olivia then cited “The Telltale Heart,” by Edgar Allen Poe, as a story that made her re-examine how writing could convey serious or even scary feelings. She began incorporating more serious ideas inspired by class readings into the writing she did in and out of school, including a one hundred-page poetry book she said she had been working on at home. She showed the results of her attempts to write more seriously, specifically her memoir from class, to her mother:

She wants to read my stuff, and I give it to her, and she's like, “I didn't know that you could write that way,” because when I was younger I'd always write little books and stuff like that, but now that I'm older I'm trying to write more serious stuff, and I guess she

didn't read a lot for many years, and she got really surprised when she saw that I could do something like that. (interview, May 20, 2014)

As Mr. Royal connected this practice to an economy of growing in social and emotional maturity, Olivia also saw her realization that writing can deal with serious topics in serious ways as a process of maturing. Mr. Royal intended for students to use his reading selections to learn how to apply specific skills, like writing with sensory details or controlling voice to establish tone, and yet Olivia took from those experiences a different message: writing can convey serious ideas. Olivia's statements demonstrate that she appropriated this writing practice through her own interpretation of its ideological freight (that writers read to become better writers).

### **5.1.2 Share your story**

Focal students' responses to the *share your story* literacy practice drew on Mr. Royal's construction of the ideological freight of the practice: good writing shares important parts of the writer with an audience. Each of the five focal students mentioned that the memoirs they wrote revealed something about their lives that they considered important. For Blake, it was the story of a cousin who died of a drug overdose. For Lily, it was a trip to a soup kitchen with her mother where they encountered a homeless relative. Olivia described the first five-kilometer race she ever ran and how the experience helped her learn to appreciate the beauty of her city. Joel shared the story of his sister, who took care of him and his brother, moving them into a better home and school. Finally, Hazel wrote about being placed in foster care, being separated from her sister, and caring for her brother with disabilities until the three of them were reunited in the home of their aunt.

Joel and Hazel were two of the students in the class who struggled most with traditional academic writing. Mr. Royal characterized each as less skilled than most of their peers. However, he also specifically praised each to me for daring to write important and challenging stories from their lives. In her interview with me, Hazel spoke of the cathartic nature of her writing:

I wrote it because I guess it was special to me, and I don't really tell people. So I was like ah, and then I guess I just felt like I couldn't not really hold it in but I had to tell more people, I guess, just to show my background. Because I thought that when I get older I'm gonna have to talk about it more, so just help me out now and just write about it and just tell people and make people read it and stuff. (interview, May 22, 2014)

Hazel was not writing a memoir to an unknown audience; she knew that her teacher and even some friends and classmates would see it—which, she said, would be helpful to her in learning how to share the story with even more people. Yes, she said, she was writing to get an A—no school assignment could completely diminish that motivation—but sharing personal stories in writing was a way to process experiences, practice sharing them with people she trusted, and potentially prepare to share them more broadly.

Joel also understood the memoir as being an opportunity to communicate an important event from his life. Rather than frame his decision to write the story of his sister moving their family to a better neighborhood as an opportunity to share his story widely, as Hazel did, he said it was “to let him [Mr. Royal] know what happened to my li--how I got to Troy and what my life was back then” (interview, May 29, 2014). In my observations, Joel had few spontaneous interactions with classmates, though Mr. Royal attempted to incorporate him socially. It is not surprising, then, that his conception of his audience centered on his teacher.

Joel articulated three purposes for working in the *share your story* practice:

- (a) Just to get it done, get it over with, get a good grade on my portfolio.
- (b) I think I express more in writing--express myself more in writing 'cause we did the memoirs.
- (c) I think he was gonna make us better--try to make us better writers so we can get good jobs. (interview, May 29, 2014)

Like Hazel, Joel saw grades as factoring into the economy of this practice, which indicates that neither of them fully appropriated the practice of *sharing your story* into non-school-related conceptions of its purpose. Incomplete appropriation would most likely be true for most students and writing practices learned in schools. Grades and points were factors in classroom interactions as Mr. Royal talked about having all of the necessary components of the portfolio for the memoir, but it was not an economy otherwise emphasized in Mr. Royal's instruction. The strong contextual influence of the school setting likely reinforced the grade as centrally important even when Mr. Royal's sponsorship did not.

In the above interview excerpts, Joel also felt that Mr. Royal was exposing him to a kind of writing that helped him develop a way to share his thoughts. The theme of using writing to achieve a professional position appeared more than once in Joel's responses to writing practices, though in more detail in the *argument writing is a formula* practice than here. Again, Mr. Royal did not specifically use his instruction in this practice to connect personal expression in writing to professional opportunities, nor did he connect the memoir writing to high school and college writing. Joel's articulation of professional writing did not demonstrate specific knowledge of professional writing practices, but he was imagining future uses for *share your story*.

Lily, Olivia, and Blake also emphasized their learning in the *share your story* practice through reference to ideologies of personal development and social connection, rather than to skill-based terms of access. Lily responded to Mr. Royal's call for students to share multi-layered narratives:

I felt like it went with it. He said a true story and it has a story behind it and I don't know it just felt right. If we wouldn't have went [to the soup kitchen] we probably would have never met my cousin, and he died two years after we met him. So if we wouldn't have known him, we probably wouldn't have been able to go to his funeral or see him in the hospital before he passed. That's the most important one [story] to me. As soon as he said the prompt and why we should choose it, that's the first one that came to mind so I knew I had to after that. (interview, May 19, 2014)

Lily pursued the story that was "most important" to her and through the process revisited an important experience:

Well for me 'cause I got to write about it and write it all out, and when I reread it, it brought back memories so I enjoyed it. (interview, May 19, 2014)

Mr. Royal introduced students to narrative structures that revealed their whole meanings gradually, which Lily credited for giving her a way to talk about memories that have shaped her personally. She said she consulted her mother before committing to that topic, indicating that Lily likely shared the narrative she created with her mother. Her mother was also a character within the memoir. Writing the story about meeting a cousin at a soup kitchen seemed like a way for Lily to re-visit important memories that she shared with her mother and other family members. Lily did not construct future purposes for this kind of writing in her interview, but she seemed to find the experience valuable for this particular story.

Olivia also described the *share your story* practice as helping her access feelings about memories that she didn't know were there—and develop more layers to an otherwise straightforward narrative:

I think it was for us to--well at first I thought it was just so we could do a project, but then as I started writing it, I think it was to show us how we can think of things as we go, not discover things as we go, but I didn't know until I wrote it how it made me feel and so it kind of brings out things. You didn't know that you felt that way, but when you write it, just if you write in a journal or something, then you didn't realize you were feeling a certain way until you write it down. It's [the race] something that I did that I didn't realize I had so much fun on, and I wanted to go again after I wrote that. (interview, May 20, 2014)

She again referred to how the writing can be both fun and serious. It was fun to write about the experience, but by meeting what she thought were goals of the assignment to “put in serious stuff, like the emotions and things like that” (interview, May 20, 2014), she discovered personal growth in the experience of running that she had not articulated before. As described in the previous section, Olivia shared the memoir with her mother as an example of how she had developed as a writer. In this excerpt, she also seemed to construct the work as an opportunity for self-realization, a sharing with the self. That particular use for this practice was not part of Mr. Royal's construction of its purposes; Olivia had appropriated it for something else. Her work was still grounded in the economy of social and emotional maturity but for reasons of personal enlightenment rather than public revelation.

Blake seemed more moved by the social possibilities of *share your story*. He talked about the importance of developing personal style, but the focus of his response was on using

personal stories to know more about peers. When I asked about Mr. Royal's goal for writing memoirs, he talked of sharing stories with friends:

I think it was to open up our writing skills and bring the team closer together, that they're um personal stories. There was a bunch of conversations during lunch with my friends about our stories and we talked about our experiences and just came closer as a result. I was complaining about writing this paper cause I don't really like writing that much (laugh) and my friends are like, "Oh yeah I know. I wrote about this, and this is my story," and we just discussed them. (interview, May 21, 2014)

Despite the complaining, Blake's statement revealed how the opportunities Mr. Royal provided to process and discuss personal stories in a skillful manner led to intimate conversations that may not have occurred otherwise. Abstract sponsors related to standards and state testing do not enable opportunities for this kind of personal, and interpersonal, writing development. Blake's conversations with his friends, and Mr. Royal's acknowledgment that students come to him after they have moved to a new grade level to talk about their memoirs, are indications that students appreciated opportunities to direct writing toward personal purposes that enabled personal growth.

Student responses to *share your story* exemplified productivity in the social and emotional maturity economy Mr. Royal sponsored. Students did not see writing about personal stories as impositions on their privacy but as ways to further their understanding of personal experiences and to share these understandings. For some, the results were catharsis or a new sense of appreciation for their accomplishments or relationships. For others, the results were more intimacy in connections to peers.

### 5.1.3 Use writing to challenge your thinking and mature

The focal students also recognized how Mr. Royal had helped them use writing to challenge their thinking and take on more mature points of view about literature or social issues consistent with expectations they might encounter in future academic work. Because Mr. Royal's sponsorship of this practice emphasized adopting ideologies during informal writing assignments and research writing, student responses to this writing practice did as well.

Two of the focal students credited writing for Mr. Royal on informal assignments and essays as testing and developing their ability to use writing to think. Joel articulated that belief when he referred to informal writing assignments, "I think they were kind of challenging and I think they were important to test your ability to think whenever you're reading a story or the text" (interview, May 29, 2014). For Joel, writing helped him develop ideas about the meanings of the reading Mr. Royal assigned. Hazel noticed that the learning could occur through writing to answer essay prompts like the argumentative essay for *The Alchemist*:

I guess it helped us write--it made us better at writing, 'cause before in my other classes in seventh grade I didn't really write a lot of [essays]. I mean we did but it wasn't--I didn't think they were as important as these ones, and he just made us have these serious essays I guess to help you when you get older I guess. Just the theme of it, it makes you think, and it's an important topic. You take lessons--some essays, it's just an essay, and then it doesn't even look like anything important, and then you write it, and then you actually notice the question and then you notice that it teaches you a lesson. (interview, May 22, 2014)

Again, Hazel did not refer to specific writing skills that pushed her to see her writing as serious and capable of helping her learn. She was also only beginning to conceptualize why Mr. Royal's



value of writing essays that challenged them could serve a future purpose (“to help you when you get older”). However, she recognized growth and development in herself, which she characterized as resulting from working with serious and challenging topics rather than mastering discrete skills.

Blake characterized his work with *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* as revealing the realities of the world and history. In his interview, I asked him about Mr. Royal’s goal for having students do research:

I think the goal was to take resources and learn about the world from them, fully open your eyes. I read this article about the stock market crash, and I was really mesmerized by it because all these people went through all these horrible things and back then it was a huge deal but now it's just a thing in a textbook that you read. (interview, May 21, 2014)

Blake believed that research revealed the importance of events from the past. Blake used the process of research to examine a topic that provided him with a new perspective on the world. Though Blake did not specifically project ways in which he would continue to challenge or expand his thinking, Mr. Royal’s sponsorship had shown him how to explore new ideas.

Olivia specifically felt that the writing she had done for Mr. Royal challenged her to see multiple perspectives on issues.

I learned how to look at both sides of the story and make them both correct, instead of just saying, instead of thinking or believing there's a wrong and there's a right, you could think that there's somewhere in between. What I did for [the research paper] was the death penalty. That was the most recent one I did. It said that um the death penalty is just and the death penalty is unjust, so I give opinions from both sides, and I said both of

these opinions are correct depending on what you believe, because no matter what you do there's never gonna be a fact that says it's wrong or it's right. Everyone's gonna believe something different. (interview, May 20, 2014)

Olivia saw that learning to see more than one side of an issue was an important aspect of developing her thinking. She strove in her writing to show that both sides of an issue made logical points that could be correct, and Mr. Royal presented the research paper to which she referred as an informational piece of writing. Olivia seemed to understand the task, then, as asking her to understand how multiple perspectives can be correct, which she characterized as new learning (“I learned how to look at both sides of the story and make them both correct”). However, according to Mr. Royal, Olivia’s decision not to take a stance was a symptom of her discomfort with mature topics and challenging writing:

Her weakness, if this is even a weakness, is that she's overly cautious, at times I think afraid to even take an intellectual risk, she wouldn't write something down that she thought was maybe not appropriate without running it by me first, not inappropriate in terms of you know something rated R or something but inappropriate—“This is something Mr. Royal doesn't want.” Do you know what I mean? I think that was kind of in the back of her mind when she was writing sometimes, ‘cause every day in study hall she came to me and asked if something was okay in her writing, right? I would constantly be like, “Olivia, just trust yourself, it's okay.” [On her research paper] she was taking a more historical approach in terms of like, “This is what group A thinks. This is what group B thinks. This is what group C thinks,” or whatever, “and these are--this is why they think that way.” (interview, August 19, 2014)

Olivia's desire to articulate and understand multiple perspectives on issues is valued in academic writing economies. Yet Mr. Royal believed that she had yet to incorporate a second aspect of the value: arguing that some perspectives more accurately depict her own views or the way the world should be. Mr. Royal's critique of Olivia's research paper does not align with purposes for informational writing, as defined in the Common Core State Standards which is how he characterized the genre of the research paper. The eighth grade informational writing standard (W.8.2) says, "Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content" (National Governors Association, 2010). Both Natalie and Mr. Royal's descriptions of her research paper position it as meeting those academic expectations because she gave a complex and organized explanation of a topic. While she would have met expectations for writing in an academic economy, Mr. Royal may have believed she was too tentative with writing for an emotional maturity economy because of how she displayed tentativeness with decision-making and articulating a personal position in her writing.

#### **5.1.4 Argumentative writing is a formula**

The five focal students frequently took skill-based and future-oriented perspectives on the *argumentative writing is a formula* practice. For them, argumentative writing included learning to use the appropriate writing structures and preparing for academic and career writing.

Joel, Lily, and Olivia each highlighted the importance of specific components of argument in their interviews. I asked Joel what he learned about argument writing, and he referred to a structural element from Mr. Royal's instruction: "To write a counterargument in your argument essays, why people would think this is not a good reason" (interview, May 29,

2014). Olivia also mentioned counterarguments first when I asked about argument writing, which she used to connect to learning about multiple perspectives:

When you're focusing entirely on one thing and you do a counterargument or something it gives you another view of what you're doing so that you could think. Because when he had us do the counterargument, he had us say that like, "Some people might say," and then you read about all these other people saying the opposite of what you were reading and trying to prove their point. And it's just--it's interesting to read because you spend so much time on one project and then you see what other people think going against it.  
(interview, May 20, 2014)

Joel and Olivia both believed that a counterargument involved an audience and referred to "people" abstractly, which was in keeping with Mr. Royal's instruction—as Olivia quoted ("he had us say"). For these two students, knowledge of the form may have outpaced their understanding of the purpose for counterarguments. Joel stopped his explanation at describing why some would not agree with his argument. Olivia suggested that the counterargument would argue in favor of an opposing view (as discussed in the previous section). Although both students knew to include counterarguments in essays, they had not yet reached a rhetorical goal Mr. Royal had established of setting up counterarguments so that they could disprove them in order to strengthen their central claims. Brandt's view of sponsored literacies is that they are multi-faceted and direct individuals to apply specific skills in conjunction with specific ideologies. For Joel and Olivia, they may have met the terms of access for argument writing by attempting counterarguments, but their appropriation of the skill of counterargument writing revealed a different ideology that focused on introducing other valid perspectives—rather than perspectives that needed to be disproven.

Lily referred to Mr. Royal's argumentative writing formula in describing her learning. She said that to "Write your claim, evidence, and reasoning" is how someone demonstrates understanding of a story (interview, May 19, 2014). She found the structure so important that she referenced how it helped her on the state assessments (see section 5.1.5) and taught it to her mother who had been writing papers in a Master's program. For Lily, the formula became a way to order thoughts, and she appropriated it for her academic writing—and her mother's. That purpose fits both Mr. Royal's construction of writing as a medium for thought and his intentions for the formula to serve as a template for multiple academic writing purposes.

Like Olivia and Joel, Blake also referred to an abstract audience when discussing the purposes of argumentation. He said, "You defend your position and convince other people to take on your side. Provide really strong points about why you're right and why other people are wrong" (interview, May 21, 2014). Blake acknowledged that he did not like argumentation much—that it got repetitive from year to year—but he also felt that he was not very good at "persuading someone." Blake recognized that argumentation asked him to have an idea of an audience, though neither he nor the argumentative assignment for *The Alchemist* constructed a specific audience. Mr. Royal's instruction in argument talked about audience in two ways. In the first, students were crime investigators using claims and evidence to make a case to a superior officer. In the second, Mr. Royal placed students in the position of the audience to critically analyze the claims and (lack of) evidence in advertisements. Neither of these scenarios were direct analogues for the literary analysis work students did or an academic audience. As discussed in the previous chapter, Mr. Royal wanted students to see the *argumentative writing is a formula* practice as something that they would be able to use in further academic writing and in life.

Lily and Joel projected futures for themselves that included argumentative writing as they imagined the work of lawyers and other professionals. Joel believed the argumentative writing they did in Mr. Royal's class was important because "if you're in a business you're gonna have to write argument essays a lot" (interview, May 29, 2014). When I pressed for an example, he turned to the work of lawyers: "You would have to read articles probably about your topic. You're gonna argue about--lawyers have to research what the guy did." Mr. Royal had introduced argumentative writing as being important for professional writing, and Joel appropriated that potential purpose. Outside of the legal profession, he was still developing an understanding of how argumentative writing serves a business economy.

Lily talked about her commitment to becoming a lawyer and found that argumentative writing provided many opportunities to practice skills and thinking that would fit her understanding of that profession. She first talked about the connections when she brought up the crime scene activity: "I want to be a lawyer, so that was--I felt that was a taste of [laugh] [what it was being like]. You can argue and stuff. You can write down why you think. So I enjoyed it" (interview, May 19, 2014). That activity lent itself well to Lily's desire to appropriate argument writing into her growing conception of what lawyers do: "Well, it [the formula] will make me a better writer 'cause being a lawyer, there's a lot of writing--a lot a lot of writing and reading, so I have to like--I have to start to like it and enjoy it and be good at it (both laugh)." Here, Lily repeated an idea Mr. Royal referenced in his pre-observation interview: most of the job for lawyers is reading and writing. For Lily, more than any other focal student, her future orientation helped her appropriate the values and terms of access, or skills, of a writing practice for a developing desire to join a specific professional economy:

‘Cause when you're a lawyer you have to have a claim, but then you have to have evidence, and if you don't have evidence, you just as a lawyer--I don't know, you're not gonna win (laugh) but you have to have proof and facts. You have to state facts to win an argument. I learned that also.

She shared a vision of professional success that blended the specific aspects of the argument writing practices that Mr. Royal sponsored with the values she believed made a strong lawyer.

Not every focal student found such connections to possible future academic or professional work. Olivia, at least, believed that some of Mr. Royal's instruction was more a ventriloquating (Bakhtin, 1981) of others than a personal desire to teach some kinds of writing, that the intentions of other sponsors subverted his own decision-making. Olivia participated in an after school writing club that Mr. Royal sponsored where students wrote poetry, did writing tours, and created a video of questions about high school to which twelfth grade students in their district responded. In her interview, I asked her how Mr. Royal treated writing differently in each context:

Well, after school he's a lot more free with writing, he's kind of off teacher mode, or whatever it is, where he's like, "Just do whatever you want. As long as you're writing, it's ok." But during school, it's a lot more strict *because he has certain assignments that he has to give us 'cause I recognize it's not him just saying, "Here's homework" or something, he has to.* But after school he's still the same person, but he's a little different a little bit more relaxed and a little bit more his joking self, but during school he's a little bit strict-ish, sometimes I can't tell if he's mad or if he's kidding, but after school he's always his happy self or whatever. (interview, May 20, 2014, emphasis added)

Obviously curriculum and standards do not govern an after school club, and there could be other explanations for the change in demeanor Olivia noted (i.e. classroom management strategies or fatigue after teaching the same lesson multiple times). However, Olivia drew a connection between talking about and doing writing in the way she thought Mr. Royal wanted and the way he was required to that affected his personality (“teacher mode”). When abstract sponsors worked through Mr. Royal, Olivia, at least, noticed that he was not as comfortable with the work. Her statements did not clearly express whether she was more or less likely to appropriate practices that she perceived as coming from sponsors other than Mr. Royal, but she did not find the writing as enjoyable in those situations.

Picking up on the language of obligation (“he has to give us”), I asked Olivia who was behind the assignments he had to give:

I think it's just the um like--almost the same people who do [state assessments], just the education program in just basically every school. ‘Cause I know that some teachers can control if they want to give you all this homework in one night, but I know that they do have to teach--it's their job, they have to.

Olivia’s way of explaining how other sponsors were requiring Mr. Royal to teach in certain ways revolved around a typical student concern for having too much homework. Mr. Royal was probably not the only teacher in whom she saw the “people who do [state assessments]” and the “education program” operating, but she may have interpreted the relationship created by the juxtaposition of argument writing and state assessment preparation as evidence that Mr. Royal would have preferred to not teach argument. Olivia did not imagine future uses for argumentative writing in the same way she did for other practices like *share your story*, and her perceptions of how Mr. Royal was forced to teach certain things may have contributed to that



difference. She did not say that she did not wish to participate in academic writing economies supported by *argumentative writing is a formula*, but she did not seem to see them as personally meaningful either.

### **5.1.5 State assessment writing is a formula**

Only Lily referenced how Mr. Royal's sponsorship of the *state assessment writing is a formula* practice helped her when participating in the assessment economy, that is, the contexts that valued performance on standardized assessments of writing. She described applying specific skills to meet the terms of access Mr. Royal set up: the formula and pre-writing map.

Lily seemed to see a benefit in pairing argumentative writing with state assessment preparation. At the beginning of each student interview, I asked the students what they felt they learned about being a writer in Mr. Royal's class. The argumentative writing formula was the second piece of learning that Lily mentioned, and her justification for it pointed directly to assessments:

The claims, evidence, and reasoning, I learned that. That really helped me on the English [state assessment], the writing [state assessment]. 'Cause I pfuh (exhales through pursed lips) that woulda been hard for me if I didn't have that 'cause he told us to write it out, write a rough draft before we actually write. So that would have us--the claims, and then we write evidence and then the reasoning, and that's just one paragraph right there. So if you have three things, that's two pages right there. (interview, May 19, 2014)

The rough draft Lily mentioned seems to refer to the pre-writing map Mr. Royal taught explicitly for the state assessments and involved students planning the claims, evidence, and reasoning for three body paragraphs and a counterargument. The formula and map helped Lily manage a large

task by placing the necessary elements in a recognizable template. Later in the interview, as described in the previous section, Lily articulated how the formula helped her conceptualize her future self, but managing the assessments was at the forefront of her mind. The economy of the assessment was not the focus of much of Mr. Royal's instruction, but Lily, at least, seemed to see it as a potentially intimidating one. Alternatively, when she thought about applying the formula in a professional economy for her eventual work as a lawyer, Lily saw the formula as enabling her to excel at something she really liked (winning arguments). She saw herself appropriating the same basic skills, when placed in contexts of different sponsored practices that had different purposes and served different economies, as both a coping mechanism and a professional weapon.

However, Lily wondered about the utility of the *state assessment is a formula* practice outside of the assessment context. The day before students took the state assessment for writing, Mr. Royal taught the students the pre-writing map then left time at the end of the period for student questions. Students asked what the test booklet looked like, if they would have extra time, or if they would be given warnings for how much time was left. Lily participated in that discussion but also asked a question that revealed a different concern:

1. Lily: In college do you do these?
2. Mr. Royal: {Mr. Royal looks at me and shrugs.} Only at this level and then you go to college and you can be a free thinker. No, there is no [state assessment]. I don't know of any other place where you will get a timed writing exam like where someone puts a problem in front of you and says, "Here you go, start writing, you have sixty minutes."
3. Adam: Some English class might have like an essay test.

4. Mr. Royal: Oh in English class, yeah. I had one in class writing exam.

Lily's question was a serious one and perhaps recognized that Mr. Royal's discussion of the state assessments frequently revealed negativity, which he tempered with encouragement. This moment in the classroom was the only one in which I addressed the class to provide an alternative perspective to what Mr. Royal had said (Turn 3). I decided to speak up with one way that others in academic settings do decide to use extemporaneous timed writing for student assessment. Mr. Royal recognized that he had experienced that kind of writing as an undergraduate, too. Neither Mr. Royal's response to Lily nor my own translated the *state assessment writing is a formula* practice outside of a narrowly useful academic economy, and certainly not into the professional context Lily imagined for the closely related *argumentative writing is a formula* practice.

#### **5.1.6 Good writers revise everything**

The *good writers revise everything* literacy practice was the only one that all of the focal students said they intended to continue to utilize in the way Mr. Royal intended. Students' responses indicated that when they see the value of the work, literacy practices do not have to be "fun," or even tolerable, for students to appropriate them.

Students recognized that Mr. Royal's focus on revision had influenced their views of good writing and that revision was integral to producing good writing. Blake said, "Because people make a lot of mistakes, just you don't realize them until you look at it later" (interview, May 21, 2014). Joel echoed the idea of revision as catching error: "Because uh we might have made an error, and we didn't see it the first time, and uh he just wants to make sure that we're gonna get a good grade on it, because most teachers, they don't do that, they just--whenever

you're done with a rough draft, they make you do a final copy” (interview, May 29, 2014). Lily believed the revision practices influenced her word choice:

It changed a lot of my sentences and how I thought I was like oh wow--that's when I realized I used too many pronouns and stuff and weak verbs but he does it for a reason so it makes us better and even if you thought you did good you can also do better. I probably changed "he" a lot and weak verbs I [also said] "things" and “stuff” in there. (interview, May 19, 2014)

Blake and Joel spoke of taking a second look at writing to see the ways in which their first efforts deviated from standard grammar expectations. Lily’s view was that she could select words that were more suited to her narrative or academic purposes when revising sentence by sentence. Students interpreted the practice as being useful for word and sentence-level improvements. None of the focal students mentioned global aspects of writing as being integral to their revision practices (i.e. modifying claims or evidence or reordering paragraphs in an essay or narrative), which research in revision has identified as significant to overall writing improvement (Cho & MacArthur, 2010; Godley, DeMartino, & Loretto, 2014). The way in which Mr. Royal instructed students to do revision involved charting each sentence in a paragraph and revising sentence by sentence. Thus, the experience students had with rigorous revision was with close attention to individual sentences, and so their articulation of revision as being about catching error and making sentence-level improvements aligned with the way in which revision was taught. Although Mr. Royal addressed issues like removing sentences in a paragraph that did not fit the topic sentence and matching claims to evidence and reasoning in a single paragraph, students did not experience revision practices like re-ordering the progression of claims to fit the emphasis of an argument. An alternate explanation for students’ focus on

grammar and sentence level issues in revision is that they were more comfortable making those kinds of changes. They may not have developed abilities to identify weaknesses in arguments or narrative structures that would allow them to revise for, or talk about, those kinds of issues. Brandt's construction of sponsorship does not have a mechanism for talking about how an individual's ability to use a sponsored practice develops as cognitive abilities develop. From a Vygotskian perspective (1978), Mr. Royal's revision practice may have been within students' zones of proximal development for changes to grammar, pronouns, and the like, but ahead of what they could accomplish on their own for changes to claims, evidence, and reasoning.

The focal students described several ways in which they intended to continue to practice *good writers revise everything* in academic economies, either as Mr. Royal intended or through modifications of their own design. Joel intended to use not just the practices but also the revision order that Mr. Royal sponsored:

I'm going to take the revision style like, and I'm going to write my rough draft and revise all my sentences and try to do my introduction and conclusion last. He makes us write a rough draft, and he says, "We're gonna revise the introduction and conclusion after we revise our body paragraphs." So that's one thing I enjoyed about it. (interview, May 29, 2014)

Joel expressed elsewhere in his interview that writing and revising body paragraphs before introductions and conclusions helped him know what to do with introductions and conclusions because he already knew what the whole essay would be about. No other focal students brought up that aspect of Mr. Royal's practice as being important for their future work. In his interview, Joel said that writing was hard and that focusing while writing was a challenge for him (see section 3.1.2.5). Joel may have appropriated the order for drafting essays that Mr. Royal

sponsored because he felt it helped him focus on writing tasks in manageable stages and simplified each stage.

Blake proposed a sentence-by-sentence checklist as a modification of Mr. Royal's revision process:

I'm gonna--if I have an essay to do in high school, I'll probably do the whole entire process he did 'cause it really helped me a lot. I'm not gonna make a revision packet, but when I revise stuff I'll make a little checklist, check it off (laughing) each sentence if it's good or not. (interview, May 21, 2014)

Like Blake, Hazel proposed a modification:

I'm gonna keep doing the revisions, if the teacher doesn't do it I'm not gonna make my own little map and everything, but I'm gonna read through it and have a little piece of paper and try to see like, what I can take out, what I can add in, why doesn't this go with the topic of the sentence, and stuff. So I'm still gonna take that, but I'm not gonna draw a little map and then go step by step but (laugh) I'll do my own way. (interview, May 22, 2014)

Blake and Hazel seemed focused on modifying the re-writing of every sentence into a chart and then plotting specific revision focuses in columns. They believed they could go sentence by sentence with lists of reminders of what to look for and determine the quality of the sentence within rough drafts themselves. Hazel's reference to future teachers is important because she recognized that she wanted to continue to appropriate Mr. Royal's instruction in revision, even if other teachers sponsored other revision practices or did not ask students to revise at all.

Students saw the importance of the *good writers revise everything* practice for success in academic economies. Students acknowledged that the practice was difficult and time

consuming, and yet they still noted they would attempt to maintain it in the future. So, how did students see the revision practices Mr. Royal taught preparing them for academic economies? Above, Blake and Joel mentioned two possibilities: making writing as good as it could be and getting a good grade. Hazel also referenced academic reasons:

Well, I personally hate doing that. Every time he wanted to give us those stupid body paragraphs I was like, “(affecting pain) Oh my gosh,” but then I had to think about, this is gonna help me get a really good grade, and it did. If I would have just handed in my paper without doing all that revisions and stuff, I would have gotten a really bad grade, but since I got to sit down and look at every single sentence and see what the bad things are, it made me think step by step like, “How can I make this sentence better?” which makes the whole paragraph better (whispers) which makes the story better. (interview, May 22, 2014)

Near the end of the interview, I asked students about the most memorable writing experiences they would take from Mr. Royal’s class. For Hazel, that was revision:

Probably the revision packets. One, because they were terrible, and two, because it helped me. It was just a lot of work. That's why it was terrible, but I guess it like--it was fun becau--well it wasn't really fun, but because it helped me out, and I knew that it was going to get me an A, so it helped me out a lot more.

With revision, students could see the results of their efforts. Olivia saw the situation similarly:

It's a lot of stress (laugh) because when you think about it you have to redo an entire four page paper, and you have to look at every word and make sure that's correct, and for me it takes maybe three or four hours because if you really want to do it right then you have to do a lot of it, and so it ends up being a lot of work, but it's kinda worth it, because my

other paragraphs that like--cause there's one that never fits on the page--that one ends up being a lot worse than the other ones, so I mean it helps, but it's a lot of stress when he gives you a deadline so close, maybe a week or something. If it were a little bit further, if it was from a Monday to the Tuesday or something over a week or two it would be ok, but he gives you four days and that kinda freaks you out. (interview, May 20, 2014)

Although the ideology Mr. Royal constructed for the practice of revising was that good writers revise every sentence, in his class he allowed students to leave out paragraphs if they had more paragraphs in their papers than pages in the packets he gave them. Interestingly, Olivia noticed a significant difference between paragraphs she revised and those she did not, which led to her conclusion that revision was worth the trouble as long as she had enough time to do it. Because the economy of grades mattered to students, I wondered if they would have subjected themselves to a task they so often characterized as painful in an academic economy that did not value revision as Mr. Royal's did. Still, students clearly found the practice to be valuable to their writing and did not respond to any other writing practice as emotionally. They seemed to have accepted that engaging in revision practices helped them invest in the academic strain of the social and emotional maturity economy. I hypothesize that those students who accepted the ideology found in revision practices that discipline and hard work were required to make their writing as good as it could be imagined success for themselves in future academic situations.

## **5.2 STUDENTS' TRANSLATED PRACTICES**

Brandt's theory of sponsorship defined appropriation as the ways in which individuals transport learning from one context to another. Similarly, I examined how the focal students in my study



appropriated the writing practices sponsored by Mr. Royal and how they translated these practices into new writing practices and ideologies about writing.

Four themes that arose in the focal students' reflective interviews indicated that students were translating Mr. Royal's sponsorship into new ideas about writing. I created these categories of practices when I noticed that some student responses did not correspond to a specific writing practice sponsored by Mr. Royal and instead seemed to appropriate aspects of several writing experiences. Four focal students expressed ideas that I grouped into the writing practice *writers believe they can improve as writers*. Three focal students expressed beliefs related to the practices of *writers think writing through* and *writers don't make writing hard*. Two students voiced the writing practice of *writers find uses for writing outside of school* in which they described how their school writing impacted their personal or home writing.

### **5.2.1 Writers believe they can improve as writers**

Students did not state that some people are just good writers and some people are not. At the end of their time with Mr. Royal, students noticed how they had improved as writers, and in doing so, they did not refer to any one assignment, lesson, or speech. Instead, they examined changes in their attitudes and specific skills.

Joel and Lily described specific improvements in their writing. I asked Joel how he thought Mr. Royal's instruction prepared him for future writing: "It would help me because it helps me become a better writer. It makes me a better writer and a better reader than I was before. Because I catch my mistakes, most of my writing mistakes, by myself now. My sister helped me at the beginning of the year" (interview, May 29, 2014). Joel's framework for understanding writing improvement addressed an ideology of meeting a standard of correctness,

and he had a concrete conception of improvement as being able to identify deviations from correctness without assistance. Lily recognized improvement as being able to move between types of writing and the conventions of different genres:

I think I'm a better writer than I was, if you look at my first paper and then even my paper now--or the one I'm about to finish--it's probably a major difference. I don't know, you learn so much and there's different types of things that you do with different types of papers. Like the memoir, it's a story about a story, but you can use "I" and stuff, but don't use it too much, but in *The Alchemist*, it's not about yourself anymore. It's not your story, so it's different kinds of writing. (interview, May 19, 2014)

Lily felt that she had learned how different writing practices value the use of different words, specifically how the appropriate use of different words relates her own experiences or perspectives in ways that are appropriate for generic conventions. As with the revision practices, Joel and Lily might have needed more instruction to see how they could improve global issues in their writing, but in their statements, they showed that they were thinking about how their writing had already changed.

Consistent practice was important to the students in identifying how they had improved as writers and how their views of writing had changed. When I asked Lily about how Mr. Royal's instruction influenced how she thought about writing in relation to her goals for college and being a lawyer, she said, "I learned that I wasn't that good of a writer as I thought I was when I first started. I think I got better as we kept writing, and I've learned a lot" (interview, May 19, 2014). Mr. Royal's instruction may have challenged the frameworks Lily formed through earlier experiences, which forced her to reassess what she thought good writing was and

how her writing compared to good writing. However, as Lily said, they “kept writing,” which she credited with helping her to continue learning and improving.

When I asked Hazel what she had learned about herself as a writer in Mr. Royal’s class, she stated that her attitude had begun to move away from essentialized ideas of good and bad writers:

I thought I was a terrible writer. I mean I’m not a very good writer, but I just like it—but in the beginning, I would hate writing, every time my teacher would say, “Well write” or something, it was like, “Oof,” bring tears to my eyes. I hated it so bad, but now I don’t hate it as much, I actually kind of like it even though I’m not very good at it, but (laughing) yeah I like it more ‘cause I think I’m a little better at it, and since I’m better at it I feel that if I do it more and more it’ll help me better on it. Then I’ll be a super good writer and stuff. (interview, June 9, 2014)

Hazel believed that “more and more” writing had helped her as a writer and would continue to do so. What was most important for Hazel in this moment was recognizing that her practice had changed from what had been a strong aversion to writing to enjoyment as she saw evidence of her improvement.

### **5.2.2 Writers don’t make writing hard**

Despite the possibility of improvement as a writer, writing was still intimidating for students. However, some of the focal students felt that Mr. Royal’s sponsorship helped them see that writing was not an impenetrable black box.

As discussed in *state assessment writing is a formula*, Lily used claim, evidence, and reasoning to cope with a task she found difficult, which was writing a timed essay for

standardized tests. When she could apply the formula to the task, the challenge became manageable (“the claims, and then we write evidence, and then the reasoning, and that’s just one paragraph right there”). For Lily, writing was not hard when she had a framework or template to manipulate.

Another part of *don’t make writing hard* was having a good mindset. As with the *improvement as a writer is possible* practice, Olivia believed practice was a way to realize potential as a writer. She said, “I think it’s just to show you that you’re more capable of writing that you thought you were and that you could become better just practicing” (interview, May 20, 2014). Olivia came to believe that everyone is a writer, and efforts to become a better writer involve practice. Other students similarly expressed that improvement is a mindset of competency and willingness to practice. Early in his interview, Blake used an analogy to describe his learning for the year: “Well, I learned that it’s not hard if you decide to not make it hard (laugh). It’s the way that you look at it like the glass is half full or the glass is half empty. That kind of thing” (interview, May 21, 2014). Blake was suggesting here that if a student entered a writing situation expecting the worst, the writing would be hard and that expecting good things made the writing easier.

Blake also acknowledged that Mr. Royal’s instruction had contributed to his belief that writing did not have to be hard. How exactly that worked was more difficult for him to articulate when I asked how Mr. Royal was similar to his other writing instructors: “He makes it easier in a way, he--I don’t know, he just makes it easier. He just (laughing) does something special. I don’t know” (interview, May 21, 2014). Blake sensed a difference in how he learned from Mr. Royal before he could name it. He knew Mr. Royal was an effective writing teacher, but the details of the pedagogical differences were initially unclear to him. Brandt’s analysis of the appropriation

of sponsored literacy practices included a participant who could name specific ways in which she borrowed writing from her boss and why those borrowed elements appealed to her as she sought to improve her evangelistic efforts in her religious practice (2009, p. 42; quoted in section 3.3.1). One implication I draw from this example is that a person's appropriation of a writing practice may be more powerful when they can name the reason for why they decided to take it up. Conversely, for Blake, not knowing why writing seemed easier under the sponsorship of Mr. Royal could make it more difficult for him to maintain the writing practices he learned. When I asked Blake for a specific example of a writing practice that was "easier," he said, "Revising is definitely easier because he walks you step by step through it so you know what you're doing." When Blake articulated that Mr. Royal focused his attention on steps of revision, he seemed to move closer to a durable appropriation of those practices. Recognizing that he had developed a clear set of skills (revision processes) and a clear reason for employing them (success in an academic economy) could have aided Blake's future development of these writing practices.

Lily also saw how Mr. Royal's strengths as a writing *instructor*, and not merely a writing *assigner*, set him apart from other teachers. She said, "Well, we didn't really go over writing last year. I mean, we went over it, but he's actually teaching us how to write it, rather than just, 'Write it'" (interview, May 19, 2014). Students like Lily appreciated that Mr. Royal showed them how to accomplish the kinds of writing he sponsored for them. Although most teachers would likely claim that they do the same, these students' comments indicated that writing with the practices that Mr. Royal sponsored helped them imagine possibilities and abilities for writing that they had not experienced before. Access is a key component to Brandt's theory. Those who have not had access to and experienced a certain literacy practice likely do not know they have missed it until a change in context reveals it to them. For Lily, having Mr. Royal as a teacher

meant that she experienced a new way of learning how to write, and one that made writing seem easier once she understood the processes involved.

### 5.2.3 Writers think writing through

Process was paramount in all of the writing practices Mr. Royal sponsored—even in a limited way with *state assessment writing is a formula*. Hazel, Joel, and Blake noticed his attention to taking writing in stages and appropriated it for their own writing. As already discussed in previous sections, like *good writers revise everything*, students recognized that Mr. Royal's sponsorship positioned them to be successful when they took time with writing.

Blake, Hazel and Joel observed that Mr. Royal's attention to the writing process helped them *think writing through* and allowed them to do their best work. Each time he asked students to complete a major piece of writing, Mr. Royal set up specific instructional time for learning about necessary skills (through reading, lecture, and discussion), pre-writing (through graphic organizers), drafting (by hand and on computer), revising body paragraphs, revising introductions, and revising conclusions. At no time did he allow himself or students to skip a stage. Hazel raised that theme in response to a question about what she learned about being a writer:

I think it's not just you can write something, there's a lot more parts to it, they can't just give you a theme and then you write about it. You have to have a rough draft and this and that, and you have to have quotes and stuff, and it's not just, "I'm going to write it," you have to take it through and actually think about it. (interview, May 22, 2014)

Hazel was not listing the aspects of writing that needed to be included as obstacles. Instead, she seemed to have appropriated a set of ideologies for productive writing ("you have to") that she

had determined to use in academic writing because of Mr. Royal's sponsorship. Further still, Hazel believed that taking her time on writing was one of the most important things she learned: "Like I said you have to take more time, and you have to take more pride in your work." Hazel's conjunction in this response equated giving the writing process the necessary time to taking pride in her work. Mr. Royal made statements like "Misspelling the vocab words [on a quiz] shows carelessness" (observation, November 26, 2013) in a variety of situations, and Hazel seems to have appropriated that ideological freight as a way of earning currency in an emotional maturity economy where taking the time to invest in the writing process showed a sense of pride in herself and her work.

Blake believed that writing could be fun when "taking it step by step like Mr. Royal did. He didn't just do it all at once, he slowly went through it" (interview, May 21, 2014). In previous sections, students described how Mr. Royal's writing process helped them identify ways in which they were improving as writers and demystify writing tasks so that they were more approachable. Blake similarly felt that slowing down the process was itself a benefit.

Joel discussed slowing down in order to improve writing in multiple areas. He believed rushing while writing memoirs would lead to forgetting key details (interview, May 29, 2014). He also connected efforts in pre-writing and revising when thinking about what he learned from argumentative and research writing: "You have to think before you write, and when you're revising it, read a sentence, if it doesn't make sense, rewrite it. Try to make 'em better, and if a paragraph doesn't seem right just try to rewrite the entire thing." His statement echoed Hazel's belief that taking the time to think and plan before writing was very important. He equated taking the time to think with committing to revision. Mr. Royal preached that his method for revision was a time-consuming process, but Joel accepted that as an important part of making

writing better and giving thought to the entire process. Blake and Joel appropriated Mr. Royal's writing process, which again was not specific to any one practice, to create a writing practice in which slowing themselves down enabled them to incorporate everything that would make their writing as good as it could be.

#### **5.2.4 Writers find uses for writing outside of school**

In my interviews with the focal students, I asked each of them about the writing they did outside of school. Each acknowledged participating in aspects of social media like Facebook and Instagram. Joel said he had used Facebook to request help for homework. Blake talked about trying to write funny captions to Instagram pictures. Lily did not do much writing beyond texting, she said, though her mother had signed her up for a summer writing camp connected with a local National Writing Project site. She was willing to go, and interested, but would not have chosen that. Only Olivia and Hazel talked about out-of-school writing that was more substantial in length and tied to their personal or academic goals. Each connected her out of school writing to different ideologies present in Mr. Royal's class.

For Olivia, personal writing involved fiction and poetry. In earlier sections, I have discussed how she felt her writing and personal writing had changed to reflect the "serious" nature of the reading and writing Mr. Royal asked of the class. His influence did not seem to extend to what she thought she could do with her out of school writing:

I usually just write about fiction and a lot of poetry and I think once when--it was so many years ago--oh, I think I wrote a non-fiction book about bullying or something, and I think it would be cool--'cause I actually looked into--my friend she had one of her books published, and I thought it would be cool to see if that would help me out in life or



something if I could get something like that. So I just try to do what I like to do and try to make it count for something in the future. So I've looked at publishing stuff, but I can never tell what's real or not so--what's a scam or something, but I always write about things that--realistic fiction or just things that could happen, same with poetry and stuff, it's just the way I express myself sometimes. (interview, May 20, 2014)

Olivia saw writing outside of school as both a means of expression and a help for future goals. Publishing was a goal for her, but she seemed unsure of the best way to pursue that goal and had a skeptical mind about what she found on her own. She did not name Mr. Royal as a resource for her in that search, though in his first interview with me he revealed that he had pursued some forms of publishing himself, mostly in newspapers. Instead, she studied what peers of hers had done:

I'm not gonna be a permanent author or something, but for fun or something, 'cause I know it's possible, because a few of my friends did that, and my mom's boyfriend's daughter who lives with us sometimes, she already has, her school did a poetry thing, and she has it published in a book, and I think that's really cool and a few of my friends that I went to a summer camp with, they had theirs done too, and they were getting--it was real contracts and stuff like that, and I thought it was really neat, and it could help me in the future--college application--if they see that you've actually done something like that, it could help you.

Olivia's friends had access to publication that she had not experienced herself. She saw publication as currency in the economy of college applications, which was an economy not explicitly referenced in my observations of Mr. Royal's classroom—just as submitting work for formal publication was a use for writing that Mr. Royal did not sponsor. Because Olivia did not

have access to publishing through school-based sponsorship, she was open to other means of pursuing her goals for practice, but without guidance, she felt more vulnerable (“I can never tell...what's a scam”).

Hazel did not construct her out of school writing as being future-oriented. It was similar to her response to the *share your story* practice, which she used to write for personal catharsis: “Out of school, I don't know, sometimes I'll just be in the mood to write something. I'll just write a story or something. I don't know” (interview, June 9, 2014). Hazel did not see the stories as highly meaningful personal expressions, saying that they were usually about animals and that she threw them out after writing them. However, they had a purpose: “Entertainment (laughing) I don't know. Yeah, I just do it ‘cause I'm bored or something so I just start writing something.” Hazel saw writing as a viable way to engage her mind and work through boredom, which does not align with any specific economies supported by Mr. Royal's sponsorship. She had been writing such stories “forever,” and yet she started the school year with an aversion to writing in class. When she pictured future professions for herself, she gravitated to careers like nursing where she did not see much need for writing, but when I asked her how her learning in Mr. Royal's class might influence her vision for herself in the future, she saw that writing for personal fulfillment was possible: “It would be I guess easier to write--to write more I guess, ‘cause I would know more stuff like, and then my writing would be better, so then I'd feel all happy, and then I would write more (laugh) [if] I feel I write good.” Perhaps Mr. Royal's sponsorship of Hazel's writing, particularly in the *share your story* practice, allowed her to develop confidence that success in academic economies was possible and that because she had demonstrated that she could work within economies of social and emotional maturity, she could be more confident in using writing out of school to be happy.

Both students who wrote outside of school already did so before they entered Mr. Royal's classroom, and neither attributed their learning in his class to changes in their out of school practices. For Hazel, though, her experiences had given her greater confidence that she could use writing effectively for her own purposes. For Olivia, she seemed to feel that success as a published writer was possible, at least for the limited and pragmatic purposes she imagined. Recall that Mr. Royal specifically mentioned Olivia as someone who had some dreams of being a writer, and that he had intentionally focused on providing encouraging feedback on students' final drafts as a way of positioning them to see their skills as writers (see section 4.2.6). Almost all focal students responded to Mr. Royal's sponsorship with a positive view of their own potentials as writers for academic, professional, and personal uses. Mr. Royal's encouragement seemed to be a contributing factor.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I address each research question in the light of findings discussed in chapters four and five. Next, I draw implications for further research and instruction that draws on Brandt's theory of sponsorship as applied through this study.

### 6.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1

**6.1.1 How does a skilled middle-level teacher sponsor multiple writing practices in his English Language Arts classroom, and what practices is he sponsoring? What terms of access, ideological freight, and economies do these sponsored writing practices represent?**

In applying Brandt's theory of *sponsors of literacy* (1998; 2009) to a study of the writing instruction in one eighth grade ELA classroom, I defined three key elements of writing practices: terms of access (skills that needed to be applied effectively), ideological freight (values and beliefs that needed to be accepted), and economies (sponsors' intentions for purposes for writing). I identified six practices that Mr. Royal sponsored in his classroom. In a preliminary member check with Mr. Royal, I shared the six writing practices I identified in his instruction with definitions of the positions, terms of access, ideological freight, and economies involved in each as well as an overview of my analysis of the differences in his instruction and students'

appropriations of the writing practices in his classroom. He agreed that my interpretations looked accurate. *Read with a writer's sensibility* involved reading texts to learn and apply aspects of the writer's craft. *Share your story* asked students to write narratives that shared important personal experiences. *Use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* was a means for using different kinds of writing and research to practice new ideas and perspectives. Mr. Royal constructed *argumentative writing is a formula* to have students create arguments that had arguable thesis statements, claims, evidence, reasoning, and counterarguments. *State assessment writing is a formula* involved the same terms of access, or skills, but changed the context from a literary analysis essay to timed writing for standardized tests and added a pre-writing map. Finally, the writing practice of *good writers revise everything* was sponsored through the sentence-by-sentence revision practices that Mr. Royal required for multiple writing assignments across curricular units.

Over the six months that I spent in Mr. Royal's classroom, I saw him take multiple instructional approaches to sponsoring writing. Most often, he led students in whole class activities like teacher-centered discussions and guided practice. These modes were important for creating positions and writing identities for the class within writing practices. In most of the practices, he positioned students as writers, implying that students' efforts to improve their writing could extend beyond the immediate context of his classroom. *State assessment writing is a formula* was the only practice in which the only position available to the class was the position of student, which meant the purpose for their work was framed as writing in a way that was only important for a limited school context. From the positions Mr. Royal created, he involved students in storylines through which he communicated the ideological freight of the practices he sponsored, as when he told students that they should share stories that were important to them or

that good writers give themselves enough time to revise everything. Guided practice activities were more often used for introducing students to the skill-based terms of access to writing practices, as when Mr. Royal led students in practicing revision or modifying thesis statements to fit the form he wanted.

Independent writing was the second most common instructional mode through which Mr. Royal sponsored writing practices. When he assigned what he called informal writing assignments, he wanted students to use them as a space to try out ideas they had about texts before they brought them to the whole class. Students experimented with new perspectives on the world, as when he had them write about how they were influenced by gendered stereotypes. The independent writing time Mr. Royal gave students during the creation of larger assignments provided opportunities for them to apply the constellation of skills and beliefs necessary to participate in sponsored practices while still having access to their sponsor.

Mr. Royal's sponsorship of the six writing practices I identified supported Street's theory of literacy as ideological (1993). Students needed to learn multiple facets of most of the writing practices in order use them successfully, and not just skills but also culturally-mediated ideas about the utility of each practice and the values and ideologies undergirding each practice. Mr. Royal's instruction did not articulate much detail about the communities of practice outside of his classroom that students' writing practices could serve (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), but the ways in which he led students through some practices, notably revision, approximated the work of professional writers. And students like Lily were able to imagine how practices like *argument writing is a formula* could help them begin to participate in professional communities.

The terms of access to the practices Mr. Royal sponsored were practice-specific. For *read with a writer's sensibility*, students needed to be able to read professional, teacher, and student-created models and find aspects of the writers' craft to discuss with the class in preparation for their own writing. In *share your story*, students were positioned as writers who created narratives that included strong examples of sensory details, voice, tone, setting, and earned themes (themes that are demonstrated through the action of the narrative). Mr. Royal's sponsorship of *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* did not focus on instruction of skills, but students needed to use writing to express opinions and be able to incorporate research effectively. Students engaged in the *argumentative writing is a formula* practice by crafting analytical thesis statements with subordinating conjunctions; body paragraphs with claims, evidence, and reasoning; and counterarguments. Mr. Royal positioned students as writers for this work when he introduced them to concepts like audience, but also positioned them as middle school students because their efforts were simultaneously directed toward the *state assessment writing is a formula* practice. In *good writers revise everything*, students were again positioned as writers as they engaged in processes of charting sentences and analyzing them through attention to weak words, weak verbs, repetitive pronouns, and the presence of elements from the argumentative formula.

Mr. Royal also constructed unique ideological freight for each practice through his sponsorship. To participate in the *read with a writer's sensibility* writing practice, students needed to believe that they could use what they read to become better writers. To *share their stories*, students needed to accept that their writing would reveal aspects of themselves to others and be willing to challenge themselves by telling meaningful personal stories in pursuit of strong narratives that have a story within the story. To *use writing to challenge their thinking and*

*mature*, students needed to be willing to use writing to try new ideas and then share those ideas with others. They needed to accept that writing could be used for tentative positions and not just firm opinions. To participate in *argumentative writing is a formula*, students needed to accept that arguments consist of claims, evidence, and reasoning, and that applying those elements as a formula constitute effective argumentation. Again, students needed to accept the same ideological freight for *state assessment writing is a formula*, but they also needed to believe that their pre-writing was most important to being successful in this practice and that they should write about topics they already knew about (as opposed to using writing to learn about new things as they did with *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature*). Finally, to participate in *good writers revise everything* students needed to believe that they would always find things in their writing that could be improved and that they needed to commit the time necessary to revising every sentence.

Mr. Royal directed student efforts toward economies that cut across different practices. Students worked in an economy of growing in social and emotional maturity in *read with a writer's sensibility*, *share your story*, and *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature*. When students wrote for this economy, they were asked to challenge themselves through writing and adopt adult perspectives so that they could develop confidence for future personal and academic uses of writing that would continue to express meaningful aspects of their lives or challenge their perspectives. Academic economies were multi-faceted in Mr. Royal's sponsorship. *Use writing to challenge your thinking and mature* had academic purposes when Mr. Royal wanted students to address topics that he considered more adult than they might have been used to but which reflected the kinds of ideas that would be common to writing in high school and college. He also said that *argumentative writing is a formula* represented a kind of



writing that students would see frequently in high school and college. Other sponsors were present in writing for academic economies in ways that they were not in other economies. Students wrote for college and career readiness standards when they wrote arguments as the CCSS defined them and participated in testing that was meant to evaluate their abilities with writing as defined by standards. The sponsors at the state department of education, as Mr. Royal named them for students, used state assessment writing for purposes of evaluating Mr. Royal and the school and categorizing the students as successful or as needing remediation.

Mr. Royal's sponsorship did not place equal weight on terms of access, ideological freight, and appeals to economies for each practice. With some practices, he emphasized their ideological nature. The most ideology-centric practice was *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature*. He spent considerable time on building ideologies for all of the practices in which students worked toward an economy of growing in social and emotional maturity, including *read with a writer's sensibility* and *share your story*. For *share your story*, students needed to write stories that challenged them to earn Mr. Royal's praise, but if they did that but did not skillfully apply aspects of writing craft that he had taught, he still considered, their attempts successful. The two practices in which other sponsors most clearly worked through Mr. Royal, *argumentative writing is a formula* and *state assessment writing is a formula*, were the two practices for which instruction was most skill-based, particularly *state assessment writing is a formula*. They were also the practices Mr. Royal said he needed to re-teach the most to all students regardless of their typical academic performance, "And yet," Mr. Royal observed, "almost all the students can remember the topic they explored in the memoir [in later years]" (personal communication, April 7, 2015). The economies these practices served were also the most clearly defined: students earn a score on a test or meet pre-determined definitions of

argument writing. Perhaps there was less need to project future uses for those types of writing as a result. *Good writers revise everything* was the practice in which Mr. Royal's sponsorship most balanced instruction in terms of access and ideology. Each form of participation in the practice was necessary for the other. To revise well, students needed to apply the process he taught to all of the required paragraphs, but they could only successfully complete that process if they committed themselves to investing as much time as it took to revise well.

Mr. Royal drew from multiple influences in his instruction. As previously noted, as a fellow of the National Writing Project, Mr. Royal valued the NWP stance that the best teachers of writing are writers themselves. However, in our conversations, he said he wrote with students before engaging in professional development with that group. In fact, the aspects of his work that were most clearly tied to his time with the National Writing Project occurred in an after school Writer's Workshop club. In the classroom, his practice was more influenced by the ways he was sponsored into teaching by his teacher education program. Ideologically, he valued discussion as a main mode of instruction. In his teacher education program, he would have had at least three courses in which leading discussion was a major learning focus. During this study, I frequently observed that he referenced books he acquired from his teacher education program and used other resources he learned to use there, such as the discussion maps he had Blake complete. He also referenced the influence of his undergraduate writing major on his instruction, which was clearest in his references to his expectations for student writing and revision. I hypothesize that most of Mr. Royal's instructional choices came from the influence of his teacher education program. The ways in which he talked to students about writing, particularly in the memoir unit and revision work reflected learning from his writing major, but choices related to argument writing and assessment preparation were more likely to be filtered through

his education program because (a) the program had helped him learn to work with standards effectively and (b) the program had prepared him ideologically to talk back to the potential negative influences on his instruction carried by abstract sponsors who privileged argument and state assessments over all else, which he did in limited ways by making his cynicism about assessments apparent to his students.

However, Mr. Royal had choices in his instruction, which is a situation that many other contemporary teachers would envy. His control over his curriculum may have been one factor in his remaining in the teaching profession longer than one-third to one half of all new teachers, according to statistics from the Alliance for Excellent Education (2004, cited in Hong, 2010). In his work on teacher attrition, Hong identified six factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain in teaching or to leave: value, efficacy, commitment, knowledge and belief, emotion, and micropolitics. Does the teacher enjoy (get value from) teaching? Does he see himself as having an impact? How important is teaching to him? Does teaching make him happy or cause stress? How does he negotiate relationships within the school structure? Mr. Royal certainly demonstrated efficacy in some of his writing instruction, particularly in the ways he instructed students to *read with a writer's sensibility, share their stories, use writing to challenge their thinking and mature, and revise everything*. As I suggested in discussing social and emotional maturity economies, Mr. Royal's sponsorship provided him with the credit of association for providing students opportunities to write about meaningful experiences that they then returned to him to talk about as they grew older. In Hong's framework, Mr. Royal received emotional support from students returning to him to talk about the importance of their memoir writing and saw value in continuing to teach those forms of writing that were likely to prompt such

conversations despite a general lack of focus on narrative writing in standards and secondary and post-secondary academic writing.

## 6.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2

### **6.2.1 How do students appropriate (take up and modify) the writing practices sponsored by their teacher? How do students' positions as writers, and their projections of possible writing identities, develop in response to their teacher's sponsorship?**

As Mr. Royal's instruction at times emphasized ideologies more than skills and skills more than ideologies, so too did focal students' appropriations of writing practices. As writers, their appropriation of sponsored practices sometimes maintained Mr. Royal's constructions, but they also modified practices by emphasizing ideology where Mr. Royal emphasized skill or imagining economies for practices that were not addressed in his instruction. From their positions as writers, they also projected possible uses for writing that synthesized and translated Mr. Royal's sponsorship into new storylines about how writers work.

*Read with a writer's sensibility* was primarily an ideological practice in Mr. Royal's construction of it, and it remained as such for Olivia, the only student to mention how reading affected her writing. However, she found a different ideology than the one Mr. Royal intended. She saw in reading for Mr. Royal a seriousness of topic and tone that she had not encountered elsewhere. She appropriated that seriousness in her memoir for class and personal writing.

The focal students maintained the ideological focuses of *share your story* that Mr. Royal sponsored, but largely saw the practice as an ideological one without also referencing the skills

he built into it. The focal students accepted the ideology that they should pick personally meaningful stories to write and that they would reveal themselves to others through their writing and constructed multiple benefits for doing so, including personal growth and social bonding. While Joel and Hazel accepted the position of writer for those ideologies, they also maintained a position of student in referencing grades as motivators for writing their memoirs. Students' projections of futures for this practice involved continuing to share stories, though not necessarily in writing, and business writing.

Students also maintained ideological focuses for *use writing to challenge your thinking and mature*. Writing became a means of capturing thoughts and preparing themselves to talk or write longer essays. Writing also revealed learning as students worked through tasks and new perspectives on the world as they selected evidence to include in writing.

When students talked about *argumentative writing is a formula*, they described the skills they wanted to appropriate for their future academic and professional writing—which was in keeping with Mr. Royal's sponsorship of that practice. Students nominated the specific elements of arguments they found most helpful, either counterarguments or Mr. Royal's formula. Joel and Lily connected the practice to future professional identities in business and the law. Lily seemed especially eager to appropriate the understanding of argument that she gained from Mr. Royal's sponsorship to what she imagined work as a lawyer would be like. Olivia, at least, noticed that Mr. Royal's instruction in this practice and *state assessment writing is a formula* occurred at the behest of other sponsors, and while it was not necessarily connected, she did not project a future for herself that valued argumentative writing as she did with other personal kinds of writing.

Students had little to say about their appropriation of *state assessment writing is a formula*, which perhaps would be how Mr. Royal preferred it given the multiple cynical

comments he made about its purposes and worth. Lily noted that she appropriated the skills of the practice in the way Mr. Royal intended, but neither she nor him imagined a use for the practice outside of standardized tests.

All focal students described *good writers revise everything* as a practice they wanted to appropriate for future academic writing. They also could name both terms of access and ideologies that they would appropriate, though for most students there were some differences in the skills they planned to appropriate and what Mr. Royal had sponsored. Students imagined their future revision processes as modifications of what Mr. Royal had taught, more like checklists of what to look for in each sentence rather than actual charting and revising of every sentence. Students' strong affective reactions to the practice coupled with statements of the value they found in it suggested that in accepting the ideologies of *good writers revise everything*, they were adding to it the economy of growing in social and emotional maturity. If they could show the maturity necessary for a discipline like revision, they could position themselves well for academic writing success.

The potential identity implications of Mr. Royal's sponsorship and students' appropriations of practices took multiple forms. One form was the new practices students created out of Mr. Royal's instruction. The focal students saw themselves improving as writers, managing difficult writing tasks so that writing seemed easier, slowing down enough to think through their writing, and possibly writing outside of school for their own purposes. Lily was the student who most clearly articulated a future identity for herself that included a specific practice she learned under Mr. Royal's sponsorship. In order to become a lawyer, she wanted to develop her abilities with argument writing, and specifically the claim, evidence, and reasoning formula. Olivia saw her future identity as a college student as being partially dependent on

writing, specifically her ability to publish some of her writing before she applied to a college. However, Mr. Royal's sponsorship did not address publishing, and so her articulation of that goal must have grown out of ideologies she encountered elsewhere.

Students' academic identities may have had some influence on their writing identities as well. I said that Blake, Olivia, and Lily were on Troy's highest honors list. Hazel and Joel were not. Though Mr. Royal did not indicate that he graded students any differently based on his perception of their general academic abilities, he did specifically single out Hazel and Joel for praise for their accomplishments in memoir writing despite acknowledging that the technical aspects of the writing were not on par with their peers. Hazel had overcome a writing aversion in Mr. Royal's class and seemed to feel equipped to achieve more academic success as a result. Joel's *modus operandi*, in both his and Mr. Royal's formulation, was hard work. Joel had little to say about his potential academic successes but did see for himself professional uses for writing. As "honors" students, Blake, Olivia, and Lily each saw themselves as clearly bound for college. Interestingly, Blake and Olivia did not particularly seem to like the kinds of writing most valued in post-secondary academic economies: argument writing. However, perhaps their status as generally academically successful, and their abilities with producing writing in the manner requested of them by school even without personal commitment to that kind of writing, shielded them from intervention meant to increase their "buy in" to that practice.

### **6.3 LIMITATIONS**

This study had several important limitations. In this section, I outline those limitations in terms of data collection, data triangulation, the study's context, and my positionality in the study.

I had limited access to students, even the five focal students. I was not able to follow the students to other classes to see how their roles as students changed under the influence of different teachers and with different peers. I was also not able to follow students to observe how they used writing and other literacies outside of school. All claims in this study related to students' appropriation of writing sponsorship and developing writing identities are therefore limited to a single classroom context, student self-reporting, and the teacher's perceptions of the students. Similarly, I relied on publicly observable data and student self-reporting for background information on their academic and personal lives. While I designed the study in this way to protect student privacy, I am limited in my ability to generalize findings without more demographic information.

I triangulated data within the data sources available to my study, but more rigorous member checks than those described with Mr. Royal in the previous section would have provided further opportunities to bring other voices, especially those of the students, into the study. I was restricted from following up with students after the interviews I conducted with students, and though I was able to ask students about their views of what was important in Mr. Royal's instruction, I could not check my interpretations with them. Mr. Royal and I have engaged in preliminary sharing of interpretations, but as I myself experienced as a former teacher-subject of educational research, I believe that process should be ongoing and collaborative.

This study was also limited in that I conducted it in a single context. The data does not generalize in the same way that a comparative study of multiple classrooms might. However, as I will discuss in the implications sections, this study lays the groundwork for recognizing patterns of sponsorship and appropriation that could be explored in larger-scale studies.



Finally, this study benefitted from but was also limited by the shared history between Mr. Royal and myself. Mr. Royal acknowledged that some of his teaching was different in the period that I observed than in others, as when he asked students to evaluate the effectiveness of their whole class discussions about *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I did not observe instruction in his classroom that I recognized as being directly tied to learning from the course in which he was my student, though as I have said, many aspects of his instruction did seem to have origins in his teacher education program. My familiarity with the techniques and ideologies of his instruction may have prevented me from recording and explaining aspects of his classroom that seemed like educational givens to my sensibilities.

## **6.4 IMPLICATIONS**

As Brandt's theory of *sponsors of literacy* had not yet been applied as a frame to explain writing instruction in a classroom study at any level, the findings from this study can suggest several implications for future research and instruction in English Language Arts.

### **6.4.1 Implications for research**

Brandt's theory revealed important features of writing instruction that research can continue to explore. Learning writing practices involves more than the transmission of skills. Teachers also communicate ideologies about and purposes for writing as they act as sponsors. As Rex found in her study of orienting discourses (2002), those ideologies, purposes, and storylines matter for student learning. The theory of sponsorship provides a new means for researchers to discuss the

multi-faceted nature of writing instruction and the multi-faceted nature of student appropriation of writing instruction. In my study, students appropriated practices when the skills involved aligned with their future academic and professional goals (the argument formula, Lily, and her desire to go through law school and be a lawyer). Students also appropriated practices when the ideologies involved were personally meaningful to them (revealing important stories through memoirs). However, in some cases, students appropriated practices for immediate purposes but did not construct future purposes for further appropriation (such as state assessment writing). Studies of sponsorship across multiple contexts may reveal more about why students decide to engage in skill-based, ideology-based, purpose-based, or hybrid appropriations of the literacy practices that teachers sponsor.

These patterns of sponsorship and appropriation form the basis for further work with sponsorship in classrooms that expands on this study. First, researchers could examine the instruction of writing teachers to reveal skill-dominant, ideology-dominant, and purpose-dominant constructions of writing. They could seek to correlate different constructions of writing with observational and interview data that reveals the local and abstract sponsors of writing in multiple classrooms. Based on my work with Mr. Royal, I hypothesize that as teachers sponsor multiple writing practices in their rooms, those practices that are strong in ideology and purpose-dominant instruction will be those that teachers find most central to their own experiences and affinities. Second, and to reach more broadly, researchers could survey students about the writing practices with which they engage in their English classes, in other classes, and in out of school spaces and how and from whom they learned those practices. A survey could also give students the opportunity to articulate personal, academic, and professional goals for writing for each practice in each context. Based on my study, I hypothesize that

students will name more narrowly-academic uses for writing for writing learned in school where a teacher's sponsorship is skill-dominant and personal uses for writing learned outside of school or where a teacher's sponsorship is ideology or purpose-dominant.

Brandt developed her theory using data from reflective interviews. My study attempted to connect the affordances of reflective interviews with observational methods that could pair outcomes of sponsorship with the work of the actual sponsor or sponsors. I was able to find connections between the ways Mr. Royal as sponsor constructed writing practices and the ways students appropriated those practices. This study was limited, however, in its single context. As research continues to refine sponsorship as a lens for classroom studies, several new avenues of exploration would more clearly illuminate the ways sponsors influence individuals' learning. First, research could follow students across multiple contexts of learning writing either longitudinally across years and teachers or as a comparison between learning that occurs in separate spaces (e.g. classrooms and after school clubs or community literacy groups). These studies would shed light on how students make decisions about what writing practices to appropriate when their sponsors construct different purposes for writing. Literacy research has generated understandings of how the contexts of literacy learning are consequential to future practices (e.g. Scribner & Cole, 1981), but using sponsorship as a lens across contexts could reveal how individuals appropriate practices across conflicting contexts of sponsorship and create new, hybrid writing practices.

Using Brandt's theory to study classroom literacy learning also demonstrated how students respond to the simultaneous sponsorship of multiple writing practices. I observed students appropriating multiple aspects of writing practices at once by synthesizing Mr. Royal's instruction into new writing practices and ideologies. Literacy research tends to focus on the

teaching of single practices (e.g. peer review [Freedman, 1992]), which provides an in-depth perspective but may simplify the process of literacy learning and overlook ways in which literacy practices are appropriated from one classroom activity and applied to another. Future research should endeavor to account for the multiplicity of practices at work in literacy classrooms and how these practices influence each other.

Finally, my study traced ways in which abstract sponsors like standards and assessments had material effects on classroom instruction and that students noticed when (a) their writing work was being directed toward limiting economies and (b) their teacher seemed uncomfortable or frustrated with the instruction he had to provide to meet the demands of those sponsors. These findings echo those of Applebee and Langer (2013) and Scherff and Piazza (2005). As researchers continue to examine how writing instruction is influenced by standardized assessment, they should continue to highlight deprivations in instruction that result and student voices that call for something better.

#### **6.4.2 Implications for ELA education**

My study of sponsorship in Mr. Royal's classroom revealed that the sponsorship of writing practices by teachers includes skill-based terms of access, ideological freight, and economies served by writing practices. First, students appreciated that Mr. Royal taught them strategies to use specific skills in writing and guided them through practices with those skills, as is recommended by Graham and Perin (2007), rather than just assigning writing. Since students said they had come from situations where writing skills were not taught, it is reasonable to assume they may at some point return to similar situations. Their appropriations of skills from Mr. Royal's practices may provide them with habits that help them write successfully in the

future without significant investments of further instruction, but eventually the writing that is required of them will outpace the strategies they have. At the same time, Mr. Royal was not the only eighth grade ELA teacher at his school. Brandt spoke of structural economic inequalities that prevent access to literacy practices from sponsors, but something as simple as scheduling decisions may also serve to restrict access to certain writing practices that only Mr. Royal sponsored (e.g. revision). From these findings, I suggest that teachers may want to commit more instructional time to the explicit teaching of writing skills and coordinate within and across grade levels to ensure that all students have access to instruction in those skills.

However, writing instruction cannot only emphasize skills. The most skill-based practice students learned in Mr. Royal's class, writing for standardized tests, was the one they were least likely to appropriate because neither he nor they constructed compelling ideologies or meaningful purposes for it beyond the immediate task. The ideologies students appropriated from other writing practices, however, affected their writing, as when Olivia decided to write on more serious topics because of her reading as a writer. The economies served by sponsored writing practices helped students see the purposes for their writing, and they could be either personal or academic in nature if students found the value in them, as when all of the focal students pictured themselves continuing to revise because they saw that practice preparing them to have the discipline and maturity necessary to succeed in future academic writing. The economies represented by the practices in Mr. Royal's classroom balanced academic, personal, and professional goals productively. Yet recent studies show that students increasingly find their efforts directed only toward narrow academic goals (Applebee & Langer, 2103; Scherff & Piazza, 2005). Teachers may want to monitor the ways in which they are talking about writing practices in their classrooms and be intentional about building discussions around how to use

writing practices outside of the contexts in which they are teaching them. In the case of writing for standardized tests, Mr. Royal could have discussed with students how planning out responses for timed writing could be preparation for writing for deadlines as professionals. For instance, someone in sales may only have a few minutes to prepare a pitch for a potential new client and in that time would need to discern the needs of the client and prepare to address how his products and services could meet those needs. Although not a direct analogue to writing for tests, this approach might have shown students that other economies value the practice of planning writing under time-compressed deadlines. If teachers are in situations where their curriculum dictates that most writing efforts are directed toward preparation for assessments, that work of connecting these writing practices to personal and professional goals may be especially important to help students see that the writing practices they are learning can be useful for other future goals.

Finally, teachers may benefit from interrogating the ways in which their instruction reflects the kinds of practices they want to sponsor, and where their instruction deviates from those desires in ways they can change and in ways they cannot. In his final interview with me, Mr. Royal realized that he was deeply committed to helping his students see writing as a process, particularly through revision, and that his instruction generally supported that goal for his sponsorship. His way of assessing student writing also placed value on process because he gave his most directive feedback in rough draft stages and fifty percent of a student's final grade on an essay was for planning, drafting, and revising. If his goal for teaching the writing process had come into conflict with how he assessed writing by valuing product to the exclusion of process, he would have needed to look for ways to align his instruction and his assessment to avoid sending mixed messages to his students. Teachers who decide to see themselves as sponsors will ask if the skills they are teaching prepare students to write well in specific practices and how

they are preparing students to select the skills that are appropriate for tasks they face. Teachers who see themselves as sponsors will ask if the ideological freight of the practices they teach is positioning students to see themselves as writers who can have the confidence to use writing for a variety of purposes. And teachers who see themselves as sponsors will ask how they can help students find value in the economies their writing supports.

Brandt's theory of sponsorship can provide both researchers and teachers with insights into the literacy practices sponsored in schools. Brandt's work highlighted how sponsors' enabling of literacy learning has a lasting impact on individuals and that sponsors did not have to be close associates of those they sponsored to wield their influence. My study shed light on how a teacher can sponsor multiple literacy practices, how distal agents can sponsor literacy practices through him, and how students appropriated literacy practices out of the sponsorship they received. Researchers and teachers should continue to question how local and distal agents of literacy sponsorship in schools are preparing students with the skills and beliefs necessary to pursue a range of personal, professional, and academic goals.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS**

#### **A.1 FIRST TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

What uses for reading and writing do you consider important for your own personal life?

Academic life?

Professional life?

Follow up: How did they come to have importance for you? What literacies have you used in the past few months?

What roles do developing or "21st century" literacies play in your life?

In your instruction?

Follow up: Explain how you have made those decisions.

How do you let students in on the kinds of reading and writing you do outside of school?

What are your goals for your students regarding their literacy development?

Follow up: How did you develop those goals? What is the role of your curriculum in establishing those goals? Of your own beliefs and interests?

What do your students see as the uses for reading/writing taught in your classroom?

Follow up: What assignments are important in your curriculum? How do you present the purposes of those assignments to your students?

What do you want them to believe about reading, writing, and other literacies when they leave your class?

Follow up: How do you talk about what literacies mean with students? What kinds of messages about literacy do you think your curriculum conveys? What ideas about literacy do you try to convey to students?

What aspects of teaching reading, writing, or other literacies are you best at?



Follow up: How did you develop those abilities?

What other resources in your room support your students in developing literacy skills?

Follow up: How do students use them? How did they get into your room?

## **A.2 SECOND TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Did you see the students developing literacy skills in the way you anticipated?

Follow up: In what ways were they successful? What seemed to help them be successful?  
In what ways were they not successful? What seemed to cause difficulty for them?

Which students seemed to show the most growth as writers? Which students seem to struggle most?

Follow up: Why did you think those students succeeded/struggled? How did you attempt to adapt instruction to meet all your students and their writing needs?

Tell me about Lily/Olivia/Hazel/Joel/Blake's growth as a writer. What was a success for him/her? What was a challenge for him/her?

How do you prepare students to continue to develop as writers after they leave your classroom?

What is the most important thing about writing you wanted students to learn?  
Anything else?

Why are journals/in-class writing important for students?  
How do they align with your writing goals for students?

What is the goal for writing the memoir? Why is it an important assignment?

What is the goal for the argumentative essay? Why was it important?

What is the goal for the research paper? Why was it important?

What was the goal for the other kinds of creating: scrapbooks, storyboards, posters? Why were those important?

You had said you target your revision strategies each year. How did your revision instruction this year do that and/or differ from other years?

Each student I interviewed mentioned revision as a major piece of their learning. Why do you think that is?

You avoided template-based introduction and conclusion writing. Tell me about how you decided to take the approach you did. How did you prepare students to write introductions and conclusions in the future?

What were your goals for Writer's Workshop?

How are the ways you talk about writing and creating similar or different to how you talk about it in class?

How are you similar or different as a teacher of writing and creating to others your students have?

What did you learn about the kinds of writing and creating that are important for your students outside of school this year?

Digital literacies?

How do you let your students know what they're doing well in their writing?

How do you help students get better with things that are hard?

What have you learned about yourself as a teacher of writing this year?

## APPENDIX B

### STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

How would you describe yourself as a student?

How do you identify yourself ethnically?

I have observed a lot of different things since November, but I'm most interested in all the different kinds of writing I saw you do. What have you learned about what it means to be a writer from English class this year?

What is the most important about writing R. wanted to teach you?

Anything else?

Why do you do journals/in-class writing in class? Why are they important (or not)?

I know *what* you wrote about in your memoir. I'd like to know why you chose to write that story.

What was the goal for writing the memoir? Why was it important?

What did you learn about writing memoirs from R?

What did R want you to learn about memoirs?

What did you learn about writing essays from R?

What was the goal for the argumentative essay? Why was it important?

What was the goal for the research paper? Why was it important?

What did R want you to learn about essays?

And you did other things that weren't just memoirs, essays, research papers, and journals but were still a kind of creating: scrapbooks, storyboards, posters. What did you learn about these other kinds of creating in English class this year?

These projects involved working with other people. Who do you work well with? Why?

Who don't you work well with? Why?

How is creating with others different than by yourself?

[[You've also been part of R.'s writer's workshop. What have you learned about writing in that place?

What have you learned about yourself as a writer/creator there?

How does R. talk about writing and creating there?

In what ways is that similar or different to how he talks about it in class?]]

How was learning about writing in English class this year different from other experiences you had?

How is R. similar or different as a teacher of writing and creating to others you have had?

What kinds of writing and creating are important for you outside of school?

Digital literacies?

How did these come to be important for you?

How have they changed in the last year?

In what ways has the work you have done in English class this year influenced the writing and creating you do outside of school? [[Writer's workshop?]] Why or why has it not changed anything?

What do you picture for your future in the next five years? College and work?

How have you come to have these goals?

How have they changed in the last year?

Next ten years?

In what ways has the work you have done in English class this year influenced the goals you have? Why or why has it not changed anything?

How does the work you have done in R.'s class help you pursue your goals?

Other classes?

What will be particularly memorable assignments or experiences from this year?

Why are they memorable?

How have these assignments made you think about yourself differently—

As a student?

Your future goals?

What resources in R.'s room help you as a writer?

In your school?

What resources would help you develop as a writer?

Where else have you learned about writing and creating in ways that you care about?

Who has been influential in those times?

What kinds of writing and creating in your class are you really good at?

What is hard for you?

How does R. let you know what you're doing well?

How does R. help you get better with things that are hard?

What have you learned about yourself as a writer/creator this year?

What would you like your pseudonym to be?

## APPENDIX C

### CODING SCHEME

**Table C.1.** Coding Scheme

Code [Observation=O; Interview=I]	Descriptor	Example	Notes
<b>Value of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	how one should feel or what one should believe about a writing practice; <b>emergent</b>	Mr. Royal: Yeah like like I had to tell her like [2] reading is very important --critically reading, like if you're going to be a lawyer, and you know it's important that you like start those reading skills and like now--um so for her I think maybe seeing the value of being a good reader in order to be a good writer too. (interview, August 19, 2014)	Emergent code label: "being a good reader in order to be a good writer"
<b>Responsibility of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	how one should comport oneself as a practitioner of a sponsored literacy; <b>emergent</b>	Mr. Royal gives a speech about why they need to all be writing questions in the question section of the notes sheet. He says he has read the book before, he is 26, and he has a Master's degree, and he still has questions about it. They must have some questions, but if they don't, they should let him know so they can lead the discussion. (11-26-13)	
<b>Skills and Habits of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	descriptions of the actions that constitute a sponsored literacy; <b>emergent</b>	Mr. Royal: "If you can find the strengths and the weaknesses in her paper, you will be a better writer." (1-10-14)	
<b>Appropriation of a Value of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	statement from a sponsored that aligns with what the sponsor wants him/her to feel or believe about a sponsored literacy		

**Table C.1.** Coding Scheme (continued)

<b>Appropriation of a Responsibility of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	statement from a sponsored that aligns with how the sponsor wants him/her to comport him/herself as a user of a literacy	Trent comments to a neighbor that Eric is going to be in trouble during class because he has not finished his rough draft and is not ready to engage in the revisions. (1-22-14)	The same example is included under Resistance of a Responsibility... as well. The first student is appropriating the responsibilities frequently articulated by his teacher as he positions the second student as a resistor (through non-appropriation).
<b>Appropriation of Skills and Habits of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	statement from a sponsored that aligns with how the sponsor would have him/her practice a literacy	Lily: 'Cause I *pfuh [exhales through pursed lips]* that woulda been hard for me if I didn't like have that [1] like 'cause he told us to like write it out, like write a rough draft before we actually write, so like that would have us--like the claims, and then we write evidence, and then the reasoning, and that's just one paragraph right there. So if you have three things, that's like two pages right there. (interview, May 19, 2014)	
<b>Resistance of a Value of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	statement from a sponsored that does not align with or contradicts what the sponsor would have him/her feel or believe about a literacy	Mr. Royal: Her weakness, if this is even a weakness, is that she's overly cautious. Like at times I think afraid to even like take an intellectual like risk, like she wouldn't write something down that she thought was maybe not appropriate if it--without running it by me first. (interview, August 19, 2014)	Here, Mr. Royal believed Olivia was resisting the intellectual risks that were part of the <i>use writing to challenge your thinking and mature practice</i> .
<b>Resistance of a Responsibility of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	statement from a sponsored that does not align with or contradicts how the sponsor would have him/her comport him/herself as a user of a literacy	Trent comments to a neighbor that Eric is going to be in trouble during class because he has not finished his rough draft and is not ready to engage in the revisions. (1-22-14)	
<b>Resistance of Skills and Habits of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	statement from a sponsored that does not align with or contradicts how the sponsor would have him/her practice a literacy	Hazel: I'm gonna keep doing that um [2] the revisions like if the teacher doesn't do it [...]but like I'm not gonna like draw a little map and then like go step by step but [laugh] like I'll like do my own way. (interview, May 22, 2014)	

**Table C.1.** Coding Scheme (continued)

<b>Initiator of a Position in Relation to a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	initiator could be a local or distant sponsor or a sponsored	teacher; student; administrator; policy; curricular mandate	
<b>Connection Between a Sponsored Writing Practice and Academic Uses [O,I]</b>	asserting a current and/or future academically-related use for a sponsored literacy	Mr. Royal talked to the students about state assessment data from previous years and that he thinks they need to improve their scores. He connects the skills they have discussed over the last couple of days (e.g. identifying sensory details) and the work they did with "To Kill a Mockingbird" as important for their success on state assessments and demanding their full attention. He says, "You need these skills for the [assessments] and for other classes as well." (1-6-14)	
<b>Connection Between a Sponsored Writing Practice and Personal Uses [O,I]</b>	asserting a current and/or future non-academic (e.g. personal or professional) use for a sponsored literacy	Mr. Royal tells students to look for [the three camera] shots [taught in class] when watching t.v. He and the class talk about crime shows as examples. Ella talks about the shots used to show crime scenes. Robert mentions the close ups of evidence specifically. (12-12-13)	
<b>Position as Successful User of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	identifying a person or an aspect of a person's perceived values, responsibilities, or practices in relation to a sponsored literacy as capable, skilled, or in the right	Mr. Royal: Almost everyone's using subordinating conjunctions at some point. I think they're making claims. They were using valid evidence. (interview, August 19, 2014)	
<b>Position as Less Successful User of a Sponsored Writing Practice [O,I]</b>	identifying a person or an aspect of a person's perceived values, responsibilities, or practices in relation to a sponsored literacy as less capable, unskilled, or wrong	Blake: I'm not very good at like--I said I didn't like the argumentative essay, like I'm not very good at con--persuading someone. (interview, May 21, 2014)	
<b>Indexed Language Supporting Sponsored Literacies [O,I]</b>	words and phrases employed in the practice of a sponsored literacy taken up by someone other than the initiator of the language; <b>emergent</b>	Mr. Royal has emphasized the use of sensory details in memoir writing, often using the phrase "show, don't tell." Today, he asks students to respond to examples of	

**Table C.1.** Coding Scheme (continued)

		student memoirs and asks how the first established place. Lily is the first to respond and invokes "showing versus telling." (1-14-14)	
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## APPENDIX D

### TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

[...]	inaudible speech
[#]	pause in speech, in seconds
[words]	guess at speech or edited speech
(words)	vocal contextual factors
{ words }	non-linguistic contextual factors
“words”	quoted speech within speech
[[words	overlapping speech

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